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Chess

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ISSN 0964-6221

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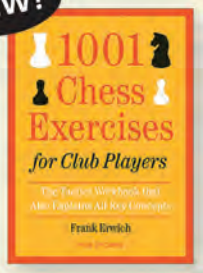

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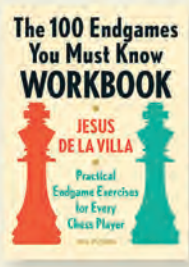

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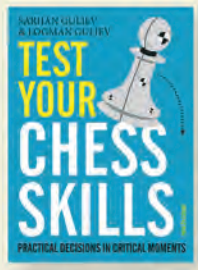

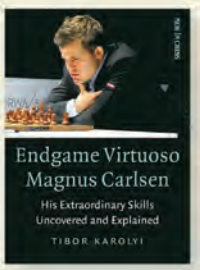

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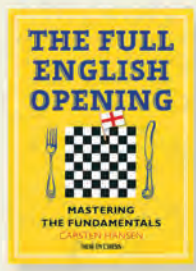

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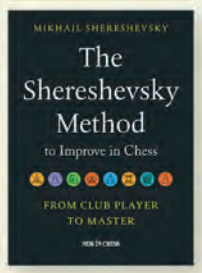

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Chess Editorial

By Executive Editor, IM Malcolm Pein **@TelegraphChess**

Last week I saw the slow death of chess in this country, as well as the future of it. I was in my home city of Liverpool for the football match against Chelsea and to promote Chess in Schools and Communities at the National Education Union Conference.

The football went very well if you are a Liverpool fan and the next evening I went to visit a match in the Merseyside Chess Association's John Ripley Cup, named after one of the Liverpool's finest players who died tragically young. The match was staged above a pub in a rather deserted part of the city centre on a Monday evening.

While the chess was very interesting, my feeling was one of decay. Like many clubs I go to, I think it's fair to say that I brought the average age down – I am 58 – and, almost needless to say, there were no women playing. That said, the home club, Atticus, has a fine tradition, is very active, has a superb website (but no social media presence), and maintains links with other clubs abroad. I just fear for the long-term future of such clubs.

A position from the game on top board. We join the action after 24...♕h5-f7!?.

S.Melia-S.Kee
Liverpool 2019

White was deep in thought and I could see why – it's a very difficult position. It occurred to me that if Black could exchange a pair of knights and the light-squared bishops, he would be fine, but if not then e4-e5 would open up the game for White. Hence I was expecting 25 ♖cd1 and then 26 ♕b1 or 26 ♕c1 followed by ♘c3. Instead, there followed:

25 ♘c3 ♘d6!? 26 ♘xd5?!

26 ♘e2 was a better try.

26...♗xd5 27 ♗xd5?

White needed to find 27 e4!.

27...♕xd5 28 ♗d4 ♘e4!

Despite having a train to catch, Malcolm took black in the majority of his games in the simul at Liverpool Chess Club. They meet in the splendid old setting of the Vines Pub in the centre of town and have a thriving junior section.

Now if 29 ♖e2 c5!, but in any case Black is winning. **29 ♕b2 ♘g5! 30 ♖ed1 ♘f3+ 31 ♔f1 ♘xh2+ 32 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 33 ♔f1 ♕f5 34 ♔g2 ♕e4 35 ♔f1 ♘xd4 36 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 37 exd4 ♕h1+ 38 ♔e2 ♖e8+ 39 ♔d3 ♕f3+ 40 ♔c4 b5+ 41 ♔c5 ♖d8 42 ♕a2+ ♔h8 43 d5 0-1**

The next day, before my train back, I managed to squeeze in a quick 75-minute, 13-board at Liverpool Chess Club who also meet in a pub, but in a beautiful wood-panelled function room, with a lovely hemispherical glass window above. The simul was against members of the Liverpool Junior Chess Club, set up by the members and growing. Local expert Nick Hawkins coaches each week and some of the children have graduated from CSC schools in city.

I conceded two draws before I had to run for the 19.47 to London Euston. One was against 8-year-old Lawrence Li. Liverpool Chess Club have a big social media presence and are growing, with the younger children starting to play in the adult leagues. There is also a junior chess league on Merseyside in which they participate. This is what clubs have to do to survive.

Mighty Magnus

The world champion looks back to his best. I think it's good for the game when the world champion wins a lot of the time. After some patchy performances and a tie-break victory in the world championship, Magnus has dominated. He looked good at the St.Petersburg Rapid and Blitz, winning gold and bronze, dominated at Wijk aan Zee and his performance at the Gashimov Memorial was Magnus at his fantastic best. The champ's TPR was close to 3000 and he won the tournament by two points on 7/9, with only Ding Liren and Sergey Karjakin also getting over 50%.

Some of Carlsen's play was magical and his pawn sacrifices against Anish Giri and Alexander Grischuk provoked comparisons with *AlphaZero*. I think there was also the post title-match boost players sometimes have when some of their unseen prep gets the chance to see the light of day. In my column for *The Daily Telegraph* I repeatedly stated that taking on a world champion or his challenger in

openings that have been discussed in a world title match is foolhardy. Giri repeated the English Opening of games four and nine and was crushed, while David Navara played the 7 ♘d5 Pelikan and lost. Sergey Karjakin also went into this minefield and lost in a similar fashion to the 28-move debacle that was the second play-off game in London.

S.Karjakin-M.Carlsen
Vugar Gashimov Memorial,
Shamkir 2019
Sicilian Pelikan

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5 6 ♘db5 d6 7 ♘d5 ♘xd5 8 exd5 ♘e7

8...♘b8 was also played in the world championship match.

9 c4 ♘g6

9...a6? 10 ♕a4 ♗d7? 11 ♘xd6# is the oldest trick in the book.

10 ♕a4 ♗d7 11 ♕b4 ♗f5

11...♕b8 12 h4 h5 13 ♗e3 a6 14 ♘c3 a5 and 0-1, 28 was Caruana-Carlsen, World Championship (rapid play-off), London 2018. In that game Carlsen also played ...e5-e4 and the knight on g6 came into play with decisive effect on e5 as White collapsed on the light squares.

12 ♕a4 ♗d7 13 ♕b4 ♗f5 14 h4 h5 15 ♗g5

Trying to improve on 15 ♗e3 a6 16 ♘c3 ♕c7, which was Game 12 in London.

15...♕b8 16 ♗e2 a6 17 ♘c3 ♕c7 18 g3 ♗e7 19 ♗e3 e4 20 0-0 0-0!

Carlsen takes the initiative at the cost of pawn.

21 ♗xh5 ♘e5 22 ♗e2 ♕d7

Planning to undermine f3 by exchanging bishops with ...♗g4.

23 ♕a4 ♕c8 24 c5?!

A strange parallel with the play-off game, as Caruana's c4-c5 was also ineffective. Instead, 24 ♕d1!? ♘xc4 25 ♗d4 was OK for White. Now Carlsen gets a mobile queenside pawn majority that drives a white knight into exile while the passed d-pawn makes little impact.

24...dxc5 25 ♘xe4 c4! 26 ♘c3

After 26 ♕c2 ♖e8 27 ♖ad1 b5 28 d6 ♗f8 Black is better, but the game goes on.

26...b5 27 ♕d1 b4 28 ♘a4 ♗e4!

Magnus Carlsen receives first prize at the Gashimov Memorial. It was the fourth time Carlsen has won in Shamkir, and arguably the most impressive of those victories. His TPR: 2991!

29 ♕d4

White is effectively a piece down and 29 ♘b6 ♕h3 wins.

29...♕f5 30 f4

30 f3 was indicated by Carlsen as the best chance afterwards and then 30...♘xf3+ 31 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 32 ♘b6 ♖ad8 33 ♖f2 ♕h5.

30...♕g6!

30...♕h3 31 ♕xe4 ♕xg3+ 32 ♔h1 ♕h3+ 33 ♔g1 ♕g3+ is a draw, but this wins.

31 ♗f2 If 31 fxe5 ♕xg3# or 31 ♔h2 ♗xh4.

31...♘d3 32 h5?!

Time trouble. In any case, White does not have great prospects after 32 ♗xd3 cxd3 33 ♖fe1 f5 34 ♖ad1.

32...♕f5 33 ♗g4? ♕xg4 34 ♕xe4 ♗d6

Threatening ....♘xf4 and opening the e-file for a double rook invasion.

35 ♕g2 ♖ae8 36 ♗d4 ♕xh5

And not 36...♖e2? 37 ♕f3.

37 ♕f3 ♕g6 38 ♔h1 ♖e4 39 ♗f2 ♖fe8 0-1

White has no moves and ...♖e2 follows or 40 ♖ab1 ♘xf2+ 41 ♖xf2 (if 41 ♕xf2 ♖e2 42 ♕f3 ♕h6+ 43 ♔g1 ♕h2#) 41...♖e3.

After the game Carlsen had some interesting things to say about opening choices and I think everyone could benefit from this advice, particularly younger players obsessed with finding lines which are '+0.2' and blindly going for them:

"You have to play well and you have to play good moves, but people, when they look at game with computers, it's hard to understand what's actually going on in the minds of the players. When I look at chess, I try to look at as little as possible with the computer because I know once we get past the preparation phase, it's not really relevant what the computer says and it's more about psychology and everything.

"In this particular opening, it's a typical case. If you turn on the computer early on it will say that White is better, but it does not say whether the position is easier to play for White or for Black. Again once he got out of the opening then it feels like he is a pawn up, but the stakes are kind of higher for him. I am going for mate and he has to survive. I think psychology is definitely a huge part of the game and it's one of the reasons why I play this particular line."

Chess and Trump

Chess made an appearance in the recently published Muller Report into, amongst other things, alleged collusion between President Donald Trump and the Kremlin. I am sure I recall Ilyumzhinov saying something about having the world championship in Trump

Tower – does anyone else remember that?

Trump directly responded to a question on whether he was asked to (or did) attend the opening ceremony of the 2016 World Chess Championship match. It was relevant as Dmitry Peskov, Putin's press secretary (and more), was in New York for the match.

ABC News published a big story on this and quotes Ilyumzhinov's son admitting what most suspected of his father's trips to dictators: "It's not a secret. He can go like he is just there for chess, for the chess tournament, but he can deliver a message. And the message won't get screwed up."

A New Number One

Congratulations to Gawain Jones for crossing the 2700 threshold for the first time in his career after he shared first at the GAMMA Reykjavik Open. On the live list he is UK number one as I write. Gawain was held to two draws early on before kick-starting his tournament with three straight wins in the middle rounds. It needed a gritty save in the final game against Erwin L'Ami to secure a share of the spoils.

G.Jones-E.L'Ami
Reykjavik 2019

46...♖e2

Winning, but there was also an amazing intermediate move 46...♘d5!! 47 ♖b7 (if 47 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 48 exf7 ♘e3 49 ♗e4 c4) 47...♘e3 48 e7 ♖xg2+ 49 ♔h1 ♖e2! 50 e8♕ (50 e8♘+ ♔f8 is no better) 50...♖e1+ 51 ♔h2 ♘g4+ and wins.

Gawain survived after:

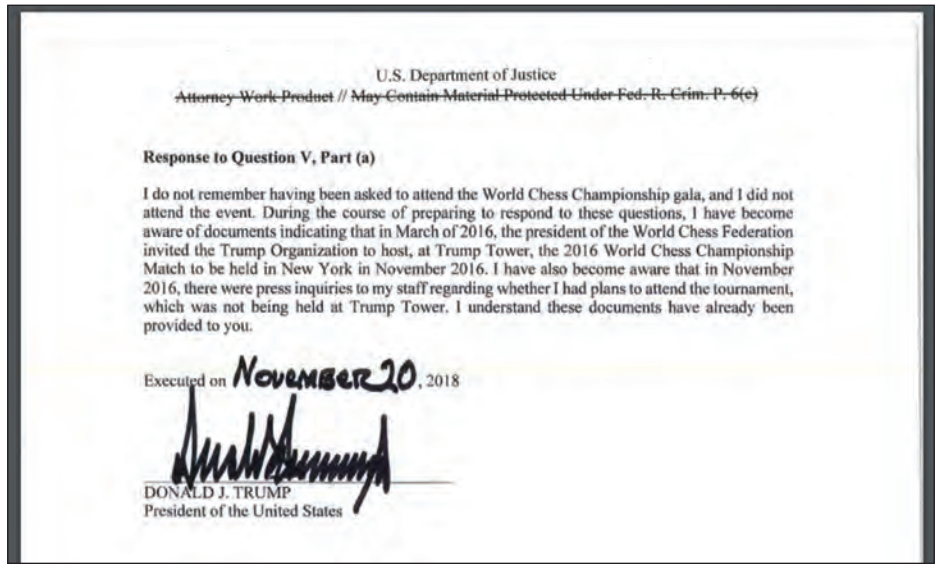
47 ♖xf7+ ♔g6 48 ♖b7 ♖xe6 49 g4 ♖d6 50 a4 ♘d7 51 ♗f1 ♔f6 52 ♗b5 ♘f8 53 ♔g3 ♔e5 54 h4 gxh4+ 55 ♔xh4 ♘g6+ 56 ♔h5 ♘f4+ 57 ♔h4 ♔d4 58 a5 bxa5 59 ♖a7 ♖d5 60 ♗c6 ♘g6+ 61 ♔h3 ♖g5 62 ♖xa5 ♘e5 63 ♗b5 c4 64 ♗a4 c3?

Now it gets tricky. 64...♘d3! 65 ♖a6 ♘c5 forks and wins, or here 65 ♖f5 ♔e3! 66 ♖f6 c3! 67 ♖xh6 ♘f2+ 68 ♔g2 ♖xg4+ 69 ♔f1 ♖xa4.

65 ♗c2 ♔e3

Or if 65...♘d3 66 ♖a6 ♘e1 67 ♗d1.

66 ♖d5!



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Response to Question V, Part (a)

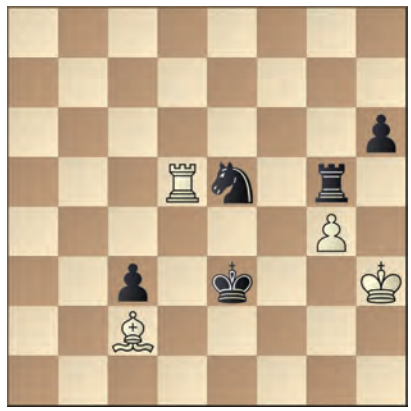
I do not remember having been asked to attend the World Chess Championship gala, and I did not attend the event. During the course of preparing to respond to these questions, I have become aware of documents indicating that in March of 2016, the president of the World Chess Federation invited the Trump Organization to host, at Trump Tower, the 2016 World Chess Championship Match to be held in New York in November 2016. I have also become aware that in November 2016, there were press inquiries to my staff regarding whether I had plans to attend the tournament, which was not being held at Trump Tower. I understand these documents have already been provided to you.

Executed on November 20, 2018

DONALD J. TRUMP
President of the United States

Whatever comes about from the Muller Report, it has demonstrated that Kirsan Ilyumzhinov was at one stage keen to hold the 2016 world championship match in Trump Tower no less.

First David Howell and then Gawain Jones replaced Michael Adams - for now at least - as UK no.1. Mickey was down to 2693, Gawain was 2702 and David 2698 as we went to press.



Somehow Gawain has enticed all three black pieces away from the prize asset, the c-pawn.

66...♔f2 67 ♖c5 h5 68 ♗d1 hxg4+ 69 ♗xg4 ♖g8

69...♖xg4 70 ♖xc3 is a technical draw.

70 ♖xe5 ♖h8+ 71 ♗h5 ♖xh5+ 72 ♖xh5 ♔e2 73 ♖c5 ♔d2 74 ♖xc3 ♔xc3 ½-½

60 Seconds with...
Aditya Munshi

Born: 29 February 2004. Yes. I am mocked for being 3.5 years old, in case you were wondering.

Place of residence: Nottingham.

Occupation: High School Student.

Enjoyable? It is very tough to do very well in chess and academics, mainly because you're made to do things you will never use again in the future, which is pointless and wastes precious time. I love maths and science though.

And home life? Can be loud sometimes, especially when my parents catch me awake in the middle of the night, practising chess or doing work!

But sometimes good to escape to: The piano or drums. Programming is very fun as well, when I have time.

Sports played or followed: Cricket, badminton, table tennis. I follow cricket sometimes, but mainly chess of course.

A favourite novel? *A Brief History of Time* by Stephen Hawking.

Piece of music? I love classical music. Johann Strauss's 'An der schönen blauen Donau' is one of my favourites.

Film or TV series? I don't watch much TV, but *Columbo* and *House M.D* are worth watching. *Mission Impossible Fallout* is my favourite film.

What's the best thing about playing chess? You're able to meet interesting and intelligent people, and up to a certain level, chess hones meta-skills which can be applied elsewhere.

And the worst? In school I often get asked how "weightlifting with pawns and rooks" is going. Losing from a winning position hurts a lot too.

Your best move? 18 b3 followed by 19 bxc4!, a queen sacrifice against John Garnett in the Nottingham Congress this year (*Ed. – see this month's Home News*).

But less memorable than your worst move? Missing a mate in four and going on to lose against Nikolozi Kacharava who later came first equal in the World Youth Under-14.

And a highly memorable opponent? World Junior Champion Aryan Tari. Unfortunately, in time trouble, I accepted a draw in a winning position, which I regret.

Favourite game of all time? Short-Timman, Tilburg 1991, is very cool, and Magergut-Bykov from 1960 was awesome.

A.Magergut-V.Bykov
Vladimir 1960
Sicilian Taimanov

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♘c3 ♕c7 6 g3 ♘f6 7 ♗g2 ♘c6 8 ♘b3 ♗b4 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗f4 e5 11 ♗g5 ♗xc3 12 ♗xf6 ♗xb2? 13 ♕g4 g6 14 ♕h4 ♘d8 15 ♕h6 ♘e6 16 ♘d2! 1-0

Black is powerless against the threat of 17 ♘f3 and 18 ♘g5.

The best three chess books: *Dismantling the Sicilian* by Max Illingworth, *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual*, and *Perfect your Chess* by Volokitin.

Is FIDE doing a good job? I am not one to comment on this, but I think they are doing well.

Or your National Federation? They could support all the top young players more to achieve international titles and raise the overall level of junior chess here by doing so.

Any advice for either? Maybe the ECF could hold training camps and closed FIDE tournaments every month with titled players invited, like other federations do.

Can chess make one happy? Crushing victories are very pleasing and if you have a lust for learning then definitely!

A tip please for the club player: Try to play with stronger players. This way you can take something from their unique style and apply it in your own games.

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A Silver Lining

Russia won the World Team Championship in Astana, but there was also plenty for England to celebrate. Michael Adams, Luke McShane and Jon Speelman annotate

The 2019 World Team Championship saw 10 countries meet in Astana, the oil-funded modern capital of Kazakhstan. It was a long voyage to the steppe for most teams and unfortunately during their 12+ hour journeys, both Michael Adams and team analyst and emergency reserve, Jon Speelman, became ill. Even if all of Luke McShane, David Howell and Gawain Jones could remain fighting fit, it wasn't a great start for England in their first appearance in the World Team Championship since 1997.

Top seeds, averaging a whopping 2759, were China, represented by Ding Liren, Yu Yangyi, Wei Yi, Bu Xiangzhi and Ni Hua. Russia were only a smidgen behind at 2758 and even with Vladimir Kramnik having retired, one wouldn't have wanted to write off their team of Sergey Karjakin, Ian Nepomniachtchi, Alexander Grischuk, Dmitry Andreikin and Vladislav Artemiev.

You might well ask, but what about the USA? As the World Teams fell just before the U.S. Championship, their entire Olympiad team was absent, as was new recruit Lenier Dominguez Perez, leaving another new signing, 2655-rated Dariusz Swiercz, on top board. As such, if everyone could stay well and especially play well, there were hopes that England might be able to finish third, at least if they could hold off the Mamedyarov-absent Azeris and the dangerous Iranian teenage stars.

Round 1 – China Blast Out of the Blocks

India	3½-½	Sweden
Iran	1½-2½	Russia
Egypt	½-3½	USA
China	3½-½	Azerbaijan
England	2½-1½	Kazakhstan

Clinical was the only description one could apply to world champions China's defence of their title. They required 54, 92 and 86 moves to win on the top three boards, but always looked like getting there and against the hardly shabby technically Azeris. India were without Anand and Harikrishna, but also began well – you'll find Baskaran Adhiban's victory on top board in Daniel King's column later in these pages.

Russia were indebted to the in-form Vladislav Artemiev who badly outclassed Alireza Firouzja on bottom board, sensibly keeping the position free of the tactical mess the 15-year-old Iranian revels in before wrapping up matters with the aid of une petite combinaison. Meanwhile England faced the hosts and after Michael Adams grabbed a hot pawn, he was never able to recover against Rinat Jumabayev.

A loss on top board as White would normally herald an early reversal for England, but this team showed that they are built of sterner stuff. David Howell's opponent's early

piece sacrifice on board 3 was always looking extremely optimistic and sure enough David ran away with his king to seal victory. That left Luke McShane wriggling in a dodgy-looking position in the time scramble, but Luke wriggled well to hold, leaving Gawain Jones to convert his extra piece and so win both board 4 and the match.

Round 2 – Big Wins for England and the U.S.

Sweden	1-3	Kazakhstan
Azerbaijan	1½-2½	England
USA	2½-1½	China
Russia	3-1	Egypt
India	2-2	Iran

Azerbaijan rather outclassed England in the Batumi Olympiad, but revenge was to be England's. Gadir Guseinov got nowhere against David Howell's Berlin Wall and while Arkady Naiditsch's choice of a Berlin sideline (6 dxe5 ♘xb5 7 a4) saw him go on to grind down Michael Adams, both Luke McShane and Gawain Jones won. The latter smoothly outplayed Eltaj Safarli ahead of converting two extra pawns in an endgame, as we'll see later in this issue; the former took on the Sveshnikov no less.

L.McShane-R.Mamedov
England vs Azerbaijan
Sicilian Sveshnikov

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5 6 ♘db5 d6 7 ♗g5 a6 8 ♘a3 b5 9 ♘d5 ♗e7 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 c4

The modern main line of the Sveshnikov, at least if White elects not to follow in Caruana's 7 ♘d5 footsteps.

11...b4 12 ♘c2 0-0 13 g3 ♗g5 14 h4 ♗h6 15 ♗h3!

An exchange of light-squared bishops would serve to increase White's hold over d5. Now 15...♗e6 would be normal, but strangely Mamedov was happy to ignore White's aim.

15...a5? 16 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 17 b3 ♔h8 18 ♕e2 ♕e8 19 ♖d1

The opening has gone like a dream for White, who controls the board. Luke now improves his forces and gradually edges forwards on the kingside.

19...♕e6

19...f5? simply doesn't work due to 20 exf5 ♖xf5 21 g4 and 19...g6? 20 h5 would also but have created further weaknesses in the black camp.

20 ♔f1 g6 21 h5

21 g4!? f6 22 h5 was another way of doing things, and if 22...♔g7 23 ♖d3, but in any case White enjoys strong pressure. Black's 15...a5 really wasn't a good move.

21...♔g7

Enabling Black to recapture with his h-pawn while preparing his next.

22 ♖d3!

A fine post for the rook, preparing a timely doubling via h3.

22...f5!

Perhaps this doesn't fully work, but it was still a good practical try, obtaining some much needed counterplay and placing a number of options before White.

23 hxg6!

Keeping things simple. 23 g4!? fxg4 24 ♖g3 might also look tempting, but after 24...♗f4! 25 ♕xg4 ♕xg4 26 ♖xg4 g5 27 h6+ ♔h8 it's not actually clear just how well White is doing, partly because Black will be quick to open lines with ...♖a8 and ...a4.

23...♕xg6

Alternatively, 23...hxg6? 24 exf5 gxf5 would have failed to, amongst others, 25 ♕h5 ♕g6 (or 25...♖h8 26 g4! ♗c1 27 gxf5! ♖xh5 28 ♖xh5) 26 ♕xg6+ ♔xg6 27 ♘e7+! ♘xe7 28 ♖xd6+, while 23...fxe4 24 ♕xe4 ♕xg6 25 ♕xg6+ hxg6 26 ♔e2 would have seen White's positional control and trumps persisting into the endgame.

24 exf5 ♖xf5 25 g4!

Preparation for completing the rook manoeuvre.

25...♖f7 26 ♖dh3 ♖cf8 27 ♖1h2?

This seems very natural, but 27 f3! was correct. After 27...♗g5 28 ♖xh7+ ♕xh7 29 ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 30 ♕e4+ ♔g7 31 ♔g2, like in the game, Black either has to wait or consent to an ending with a bad bishop and rather weak light squares after 31...♖xf3 32 ♕xf3 ♖xf3 33 ♔xf3.

27...♗g5 28 ♖xh7+ ♕xh7 29 ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 30 ♔g2 ♔g7?!

Now White gets back on track. The reason 30...♖xf2+! was correct was 31 ♕xf2 ♖xf2+ 32 ♔xf2 e4!, keeping the white king out of e4 after which Black should be able to hold.

31 f3!

31...♘d4!?

A big decision, but evidently Mamedov didn't want to sit and wait.

32 ♘xd4 exd4 33 ♕e4 ♖xf3 34 ♕xd4+! ♔h6 35 ♕e4 ♖f2+ 36 ♔g3 ♖xa2?

Now McShane's judgement of the transformation of the position over the past few moves proves correct. However, 36...♖f1 would have been a much tougher nut to crack. White can't really allow ...♗d2, so 37 ♘e3 would surely have been played and yet after 37...♗f4+ 38 ♔g2 ♗xe3 39 ♕xe3+ ♔g6 40 ♔g3 ♖8f6 Black might well just have a fortress.

37 ♘e7! ♗xe7

Forced, but now the queen is quick to wreak havoc.

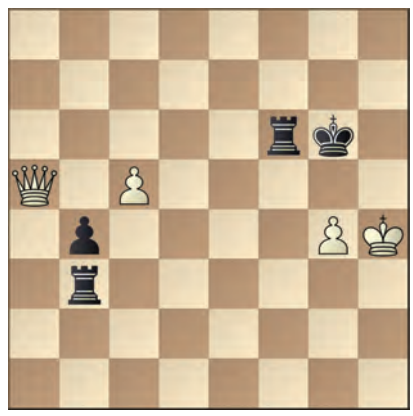
38 ♕xe7 ♖af2 39 ♕xd6+ ♖8f6 40 ♕e5 ♔g6

Reaching the time control and now Luke worked out the winning method. His king will hide on h4, while Black will be unable to both halt the c-pawn and deal with his own exposed king position.

41 c5 ♖2f3+

41...a4!? 42 c6 ♖2f3+ 43 ♔h4 ♖c3! was perhaps a better try when White would still have faced some technical obstacles after 44 ♕e8+ ♔g7 45 ♕e7+ ♔g6 46 ♕xb4 ♖fxc6 47 ♕xa4.

42 ♔h4 ♔f7? 43 ♕c7+ ♔g6 44 ♕xa5 ♖xb3



Black had clearly relied on this recapture when he retreated his king to f7, but White is able to exploit Black's temporary loss of coordination.

45 ♕a2 ♖ff3

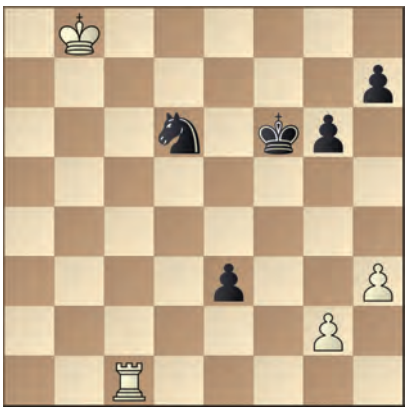
Now White crashes through, but he had

Luke McShane deep in thought during his tricky endgame with Mamedov. Luke would hide his king on h4 and convert in brutal fashion to give England an excellent win over Azerbaijan.

to avoid 45...♖c3? 46 ♕g8+ ♔h6 47 g5#.
46 ♕a6+ ♔g7 47 ♔g5! ♖be3 48 ♕g6+ ♔f8 49 ♕d6+ ♖e7 50 c6 ♔e8 51 c7 1-0

The USA also scored an excellent win. Dariusz Swiercz never looked in any danger as he wheeled out the Anti-Marshall against Ding Liren, Sam Sevian dug deep to defend and hold off Yu Yangyi, while Ni Hua overlooked a material-winning ...g5 advance as he went down to Aleksandr Lenderman on bottom board. That left all eyes on board 3, where Wei Yi was the exchange down, but pressing due to his powerful passed pawn.

A.Onischuk-Wei Yi
USA vs China



52 ♔c7?

Now Black has time to coordinate. 52 ♖e1 ♘c4 53 ♖c1 would have drawn, and if 53...♔f5 54 ♖xc4 e2 55 g4+ ♔e5 56 ♖c8 ♔d4 57 ♖e8 ♔d3 58 ♔c7 ♔d2 59 ♔d6 e1♕ 60 ♖xe1 ♔xe1 when White is just in time with 61 ♔e5! ♔f2 62 ♔f4.
52...♘f5 53 ♖e1

Black also wins after 53 g4 ♔e5! 54 gxf5 gxf5, since he will be able to establish two pawns on the sixth against the helpless white rook.
53...♔e5 54 ♔d7 ♔f4 55 ♔e8 ♘g3 56 ♔f7 g5?

Wei Yi elects to save both his kingside pawns, but he might have won with 56...e2! 57 ♔g7 h5 58 ♔xg6 ♔e3 when White comes up a tempo short: 59 ♔g5 ♔f2 60 ♖b1 e1♕ 61 ♖xe1 ♔xe1 62 ♔h4 ♔f2, etc.
57 ♔g7 h5 58 ♔g6 e2

The best try. 58...h4? 59 ♖xe3! ♔xe3 60 ♔xg5 would just be an immediate draw.
59 ♖a1 h4 60 ♖e1 g4 61 hxg4 ♔xg4 62 ♔f6 ♘h5+!

How else to try and make progress in view of 62...♔f4 63 ♔g6 ♔e3 64 ♔g5?
63 ♔e5 ♘f4 64 ♔e4 ♔g3 65 ♔f5!

Onischuk finds the only move and soon even the ever resourceful Wei Yi had to give up this titanic struggle as a draw.
65...♘xg2 66 ♖xe2 h3 67 ♖a2 ♘e1 68 ♔e4 ♘f3 69 ♖a1 h2 70 ♖h1 ♔g2 71 ♖xh2+ ♘xh2 ½-½

Round 3 – Clash of the Titans

#

Iran	3½-½	Sweden
Egypt	½-3½	India
China	1½-2½	Russia
England	2-2	USA
Kazakhstan	2-2	Azerbaijan

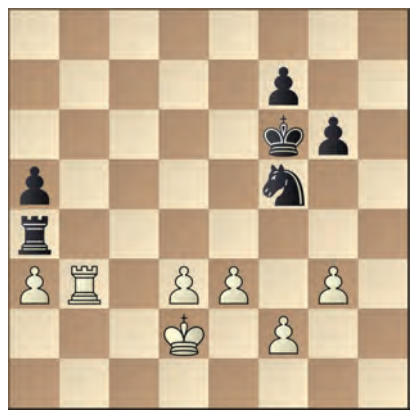
The unseeded draw meant that China came straight off a shock defeat to facing their main rivals. Even for this fairly young and ultra-professional side, it was a task too far. Ding Liren pressed against Sergey Karjakin on top board, but the Minister of Defence held firm. Ian Nepomniachtchi meanwhile completely dismantled Yu Yangyi's Petroff and Russia almost won too on board 3, where Alexander Grischuk was on top in a complex struggle with Wei Yi, but eventually unable to convert his extra pawn. Russian fans did, however, have their hearts in their mouths over board 4 where Vladislav Artemiev was forced into desperate defensive measures.

V.Artemiev-Bu Xiangzhi
Russia vs China

White has been outplayed in a Reti and now Artemiev decided that radical matters were called for.
24 a3! ♖xa4 25 ♘xc6!? bxc6 26 ♖xc6 ♘f5 27 ♗xd5

White really had to pick off this central pawn, but now Black can exchange a pair of pieces.
27...♘e7 28 ♖c7 ♘xd5 29 ♖xd7 ♘f6 30 ♖a7

We've all been here before. You're a piece up, but the opponent has two pawns, a couple of other small trumps (the threat of doubling and the badly placed rook on a4), and while you suspect the position should be winning, conversion does not seem like such a simple prospect at all. Bu begins well, neutralising White's more active rook ahead of improving his king and knight.
30...♖e7 31 ♖a8+ ♘e8 32 h5 g6 33 hxg6 hxg6 34 ♔f1 ♔g7 35 ♔e2 ♘d6 36 ♖a6 ♖b7! 37 ♖bb6 ♖xb6 38 ♖xb6 ♘f5 39 ♖b3 ♔f6 40 ♔d2



Thus far Black has done well, but now his decision to invade with the king turns out not to break the white defences after all. As such, finally getting that rook away from a4 had to be the priority and after 40...♘d6 41 ♔c3 (41 ♔e2 ♔e5 42 ♔d2 ♔d5 43 ♔c2 ♔c6 can only help Black, but White might be able to consider allowing 41 f3!? ♘f5 42 g4 ♘e7 43 ♖b6+ ♔g7 44 ♖b3 f5) 41...♖g4 42 ♖b6 ♔e6 43 d4 ♖g5 44 e4 ♔d7 Black would have retained some winning chances.

40...♔g5 41 ♖c3 ♔g4? 42 ♔c2 ♔h3

42...♔f3 43 d4 would be similar, forcing Black to ditch his knight to prevent ♔b3 swallowing up the trapped rook.

43 d4 ♘xd4+

There was nothing better, of course, but the resulting pure rook endgame is a fairly easy draw for White.

44 exd4 ♖xd4 45 ♖c6!

Activation and f6 will be a fine post for the rook, defending f2 while tying Black down to f7.

45...♖d5 46 ♖f6 ♖f5 47 ♖xf5 gxf5 48 ♔d3 ♔g4 49 a4 f4 50 gxf4 ♔xf4 51 ♔c4 ♔f3 52 ♔b5 ♔xf2 53 ♔xa5 f5 54 ♔b6 f4 55 a5 ½-½

England couldn't really complain about four draws with the U.S. Michael Adams was finally on the scoreboard and while Luke McShane's handling of the Czech Benoni was extremely creative, it perhaps shouldn't have been fully sufficient. Still that left England well placed on 5/6, level with India and a point behind Russia.

Round 4 – Draw Fest

Sweden	3-1	Azerbaijan
USA	2-2	Kazakhstan
Russia	2-2	England
India	2-2	China
Iran	3-1	Egypt

It was no surprise to see Iran dismantle African Champions Egypt, but almost from nowhere Sweden bounced right back to form to destroy Azerbaijan. The home fans were also delighted as Denis Makhnev's win on bottom board over Zviad Izoria earned Kazakhstan a decent draw. For China, Yu Yangyi lost again, to Surya Shekhar Ganguly, but their blushes were saved by Bu Xiangzhi on bottom board.

And what of the big match? Well, England were surprised to see Sergey Karjakin rested and Michael Adams held comfortably against Ian Nepomniachtchi. David Howell also sat tight against Dmitry Andreikin and Gawain Jones allowed an early repetition after being move ordered by Vladislav Artemiev. Only board 2 was looking a little shaky, but Alexander Grischuk unusually decided not to roll the dice and Luke McShane's defence held tight.

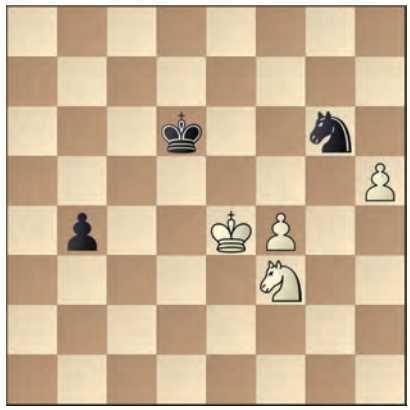
Round 5 – Russia Pulls Away

Egypt	1½-2½	Sweden
China	2½-1½	Iran
England	2-2	India
Kazakhstan	1-3	Russia
Azerbaijan	3-1	USA

It was Azerbaijani's turn to bounce back to form and China were also pleased to win. Ding Liren against Parham Maghsoodloo was a hard-fought draw, but while Wei Yi and Bu Xiangzhi won, Ni Hua was outplayed by Alireza Firouzja. Russia too could be happy to extend their lead, despite Sergey Karjakin's collapse, as we saw in last month's Editorial. Alexander Grischuk and Dmitry Andreikin ground well, winning in 82 and 79 moves respectively, while Vladislav Artemiev was perhaps a little fortunate.

Vladislav Artemiev ponders his 41st move against Bu Xiangzhi. He would find 41 ♖c3 and hold the piece-down ending. Man of the moment Artemiev would go on to win double gold.

V.Artemiev-P.Kostenko
Russia vs Kazakhstan



White has enjoyed light pressure all game and done well to win a pawn, but with a creditable draw very much in sight the Kazakh IM was to pick the wrong square for his knight.

46...♘f8?

46...♘e7 47 ♘d4 looks scary for Black, but it's still possible to draw thanks to the little trick 47...♔d7! 48 ♔e5 (48 h6? fails to 48...♘g8 and 48 f5 ♘g8 49 ♔f4 ♔e7 50 ♔g5 ♔f7 halts the pawns, in view of 51 h6 ♘xh6 52 ♔xh6 ♔f6 53 ♔h5 b3) 48...♘c6+! 49 ♘xc6 b3! when White is perhaps fortunate to have 50 h6 b2 51 h7 b1♕ 52 h8♕ and after 52...♕b5+ it's clearly going to be a draw. Incidentally, 46...♘h8! 47 ♘d4 ♔d7! is likely the easiest way to draw, bringing the king round to defend via e8 (and not 47...♘f7? due to 48 ♔f5 ♔e7 49 ♘c6+).

47 ♘d4 ♔c5

There was nothing better, as shown by 47...♘d7 48 ♔f5 ♔e7 49 ♘c6+ when 49...♔f7 50 ♘xb4 ♔g7 51 ♘d5 ♔h6 52 ♔g4 shouldn't be too difficult to win, albeit with care.

48 h6 ♔d6

White's active king would also have been quick to decide proceedings in the event of 48...♔c4 49 ♘c6! ♔b5 50 ♘xb4 ♔xb4 51 ♔f5 ♔c5 52 ♔f6 ♔d6 53 ♔f7.

49 ♔f5 ♔d5 50 ♘b3 ♔c4 51 ♘c1 ♔d4 52 ♔f6 ♔e3 53 ♔f7 ♘h7 54 ♔g7 ♔d2 55 ♘b3+ ♔c3 56 ♘a5 1-0

England didn't get anywhere with the white pieces, Michael Adams being frustrated by Baskaran Adhiban and David Howell by Surya Shekhar Ganguly. Unfortunately Gawain Jones was beginning to go down with the same virus as Jon Speelman and also

found S.P. Sethuraman in fine technical form, but fortunately England didn't lose, Luke McShane outclassing Krishnan Sasikiran.

K.Sasikiran-L.McShane
India vs England
Giuoco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♘f6 4 d3 ♗c5 5 c3 a6 6 a4 d6 7 0-0 ♗a7 8 b4 0-0 9 ♖e1 h6 10 h3

White's decision to now combine central play with his early queenside expansion fails to convince. Instead, 10 ♘bd2 ♖e8 (as in our main game, Black might do better with 10...♘e7, and if 11 ♘f1 c6) 11 ♘f1 ♗e6 12 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 13 ♘g3 ♘e7 14 d4 had seemed much better timed in Aronian-Carlsen, Saint Louis 2018, where White was certainly slightly for choice after 14...♘g6 15 ♕c2 c6 16 h3.

10...♘e7 11 d4 exd4

11...d5!? was possible straight away, and if 12 exd5 exd4 13 cxd4 ♘exd5, transposing.

12 cxd4 d5 13 exd5?!

The thematic counterstrike and now White really had to try 13 e5 ♘e4 14 ♗d3 ♗f5. Even here he looks overextended, but that bishop on a7 is out of play for now and the clever 15 ♖a3! enables him to free his position after 15...♘c6 16 ♘bd2.

13...♘exd5 14 b5 axb5 15 axb5 ♗e6 16 ♕b3 ♗b6

Luke improves his worst-placed piece and while White will be able to catch up in terms of development, he has serious weaknesses to nurse for the foreseeable future.

17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 18 ♗d2 ♗a5 19 ♘c3 ♗xc3!

An excellent decision, lumbering White with an ineffectual dark-squared bishop ahead of preparing to centralise.

20 ♗xc3 ♖e8 21 ♗d2 ♕c8 22 ♖e5 ♕d7

White's position is already uncomfortable, even if the ultra-calm silicon sees no immediate danger and displays its favourite '0.00'. Sasikiran had already fallen low on time and now, unable to find a good plan, rather collapsed.

23 ♘e1?! ♘b6! 24 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 25 ♘d3 ♖xe5!

Enabling White to improve his structure, but Black dominates the light squares and will keep an eye on b5 while seeking to increase his initiative.

26 dxe5 ♘e4 27 ♗e3?!

White needed to find 27 ♗a5 and if 27...♕d5 28 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 29 ♘b4!, when he is just in time to maintain the rough balance after 29...♘ec3 30 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 31 ♔f1 ♔f8 32 ♔e2 ♔e7 33 ♔d3 ♔e6 34 ♔e4.

27...♕d5 28 ♕c2

Now 28 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 is quite uncomfortable for White, and if 29 ♘c5 ♘xc5 30 ♗xc5 ♘c3 31 b6 cxb6 32 ♗xb6 ♘d5: for example, 33 ♗d4 g5! 34 g3 ♔h7 35 ♔g2 ♔g6 36 ♔f3 ♔f5 37 g4+ ♔e6 38 ♔e4 b5 with excellent winning chances for Black, as pointed out by our Executive Editor.

28...♘c4

Winning a pawn and now Sasikiran was quick to complete his collapse.

29 b6 c5 30 e6?

Beginning a faulty combination.

30...♕xe6! 31 ♗xc5? ♘xc5 32 ♘xc5 ♕e1+ 33 ♔h2 ♕e5+ 0-1

There goes the white knight.

Round 6 – Staying in Touch with Russia

Sweden	½-3½	USA
Russia	2-2	Azerbaijan
India	3½-½	Kazakhstan
Iran	1-3	England
Egypt	2-2	China

Even a rest day wasn't enough to cure Gawain Jones and so, as chronicled by Malcolm last month, Jon Speelman was pressed into emergency action, unsurprisingly proving no match for the fighting fit Firouzja. As we've already seen, this England side is made of tough stuff, however, and all of Michael Adams, Luke McShane and David Howell had good wins. We're delighted to bring you the top two boards with notes from the victors.

Notes by Michael Adams

It wasn't very pleasant to lose four games at the World Teams, but my team-mates' excellent form meant that we crucially won three of those matches. At least I made a more positive contribution in this game, which was part of a significant match swing from a rocky start to a 3-1 win.

P.Maghsoodloo-M.Adams
Iran vs England
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♗e7 5 ♗g5

I thought my opponent might look for a sharper option, but he sticks to his main opening repertoire.

5...h6 6 ♗h4 0-0 7 ♕c2 c5 8 dxc5 ♘a6 9 e3 ♘xc5 10 cxd5 ♘xd5 11 ♗xe7 ♘xe7

11...♕xe7 12 ♘xd5 exd5 would lead to a position my opponent had already reached in a couple of games with the black pawn on h7. I wanted to avoid 13 ♗e2 ♗g4 14 0-0 ♖ac8 15 ♘d4, but here 15...♘e6 16 ♕d2 ♕g5, as played once by Vladimir Kramnik, looks a good solution.

12 ♗e2 ♗d7

Black's knight on c5 is a little bit exposed, and his colleague on e7 is also not optimally placed. 12...♕b6 was probably a better alternative, as the natural way to develop the bishop,12...b6 13 0-0 ♗b7 14 ♖fd1, is a bit uncomfortable.

13 b4 ♘a6 14 ♕b2!

A better try than 14 a3 which I had been anticipating.

14...♕b6 15 ♖b1 ♖fd8

I need to recycle the knight from a6, but my queen is awkwardly placed after 15...♘c7 16 ♘e5.

16 0-0 ♖ac8

I didn't like 16...♘c7 17 a4 ♘cd5 18 a5, but the stronger 17...♘ed5! 18 a5 ♕d6 gives my queen an escape route.

17 ♖fc1

17 a4!? gives Black the option to look for mass liquidation 17...♕xb4 18 ♕xb4 ♘xb4 19 ♖xb4 ♖xc3 20 ♖xb7, although this still requires care.

17...♘c7 18 ♘e5 ♘cd5 19 ♘c4

19 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 20 ♘xd5 ♖xc1+ 21 ♖xc1 ♘xd5 22 ♖c8+ ♖d8 leads nowhere.

19...♕c7 20 ♘e4 ♕b8 21 b5

A good decision, taking more space, whereas 21 ♘ed6 ♖c6 22 e4 (22 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 23 ♘e5+ ♔g8 24 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 is fine for Black) 22...♘b6 23 e5 ♘xc4 24 ♗xc4 ♘c8 25 ♘e4 ♘b6 swaps enough material to survive.

21...♗e8

White is a bit better, but as my last few moves were forced, this enabled me to catch up on the clock, and although my position is cramped, it remains solid.

22 a4 b6 23 g3 ♘f5 24 ♘ed2

24 ♘e5 is met by 24...♘c3 25 ♖xc3 ♕xe5.

24...♘f6

Dodging the fork, and trying to manoeuvre the knight towards c5.

25 ♗f1

The calm 25 ♖c2! looks best, doubling rooks whilst keeping all options open.

25...♘d6

Now 25...♘d7 26 e4! is annoying.

26 ♘e5 ♘de4 27 ♘dc4

After this my knights are better placed than my opponent's. 27 ♘xe4! ♘xe4 28 ♗g2 was the most testing choice, aiming to land a minor piece on c6: 28...♘c3!? (28...♘c5?! 29 ♖c4 is very good for White and 28...♖xc1+ 29 ♖xc1 ♘c5 30 ♖a1 slightly better for him) 29 ♘xf7! (29 ♖xc3 ♕xe5 equalises) 29...♘xa4 30 ♕a3 ♖xc1+ 31 ♖xc1 ♔xf7 32 ♕xa4 a5!. This still looks a bit shaky, but the protected passed a-pawn may compensate for the other defects in my position.

27...♘d5 28 f3?!

Finally both black steeds have found good posts and 28 ♗g2 ♘c5 is nothing special. Now my opponent started drifting; I don't like the game move, weakening the kingside.

28...♘c5 29 e4?!

Forcing matters is a sign White had not realised his edge has evaporated, although 29 ♕a3 f6 holds no fears for Black.

29...♘xa4!

Seizing my chance.

30 ♕a3 ♘dc3 31 ♖xc3 ♘xc3 32 ♕xc3 ♖c5!

The point. I will win the pawn on b5 and the bishop on e8 has found a new lease of life.

Michael Adams in action against the USA. Earlier in the World Teams he had scored a vital and most impressive win against rising star Parham Maghsoodloo as England beat Iran 3-1.

33 ♘d3! ♖xb5 34 ♖c1

Although the rook on b5 isn't under immediate threat it doesn't have any clear escape route.

34...♖c8 35 ♕a3 a5 36 ♕a2!?

This worked out well as we were both struggling to come to terms with the unusual nature of the position with little time to arrive at move 40. 36 ♗e2! was objectively stronger though, so that 36...a4 can be met by 37 ♗d1.

36...♗d7?!

Failing to appreciate that the queen move had freed the white rook to find a better post. After 36...a4!? 37 ♕xa4 ♖b1 38 ♕xe8+ ♖xe8 39 ♖xb1 b5 White's loose king means the material balance is good for Black – especially in practice: for instance, 40 ♘e3 ♖c8 or 40 ♘f2 ♖d8 41 ♖b3 ♖d4 42 ♘b2 b4. The composed 36...♖c7!?, preparing ...a4, is also a good idea.

37 ♖d1!

37...♖d8

I had intended to follow up my last move with 37...e5? followed by ....♗e6, but realised in time that 38 ♘f4 exf4 39 ♖xd7 fxg3 40 ♘d6 is crushing. Instead, 37...♗c6 maintains much better coordination; it's important for the bishop to eye the kingside as my rook is about to be banished there.

38 ♘a3 ♖h5 39 g4

39 e5! is logical, cutting off the rook. There is little choice but to play 39...b5 40 g4 ♖h4 41 ♕f2 g5 which doesn't inspire confidence.

39...♖g5 40 h4?

40 e5 ♗c6 was still best, with all to play for. Attacking the rook looks logical, but I managed to spot that the now unprotected g3-square was important.

40...♕g3+ 41 ♗g2

41 ♕g2 ♕xh4 42 ♘f2 ♖c5 defends the rook on d8, and leaves White too much material behind.

41...♗a4

The most practical move, as now all my pieces get active, although the mundane 41...♕xh4 was also pretty good.

42 ♘c2

There is little hope for White. After 42 ♖d2 I was tempted by 42...♖c5 (42...♕xh4 also wins) 43 ♘xc5? ♕e1+. Alternatively, if 42 hxg5 ♗xd1 43 ♕f2 ♕d6 or 42 ♖c1 ♕xh4 43 ♕f2 ♕xf2+ 44 ♘xf2 ♖c5 and there are too many pawns.

42...♗xc2 43 ♕xc2 ♕xh4 44 ♖b1

44 e5! is a better try, but after 44...h5 45

♕c7 ♖g6 46 ♕xb6 hxg4 47 f4 a4 48 ♕a5 g3 49 ♕xa4 ♖g4 the fact that only kingside pawns remain won't save White with ...g5 coming.

44...h5 45 gxh5

45 ♖xb6 hxg4 46 f4 ♖h5 47 e5 ♕g3 48 ♖d6 ♖b8 is also hopeless.

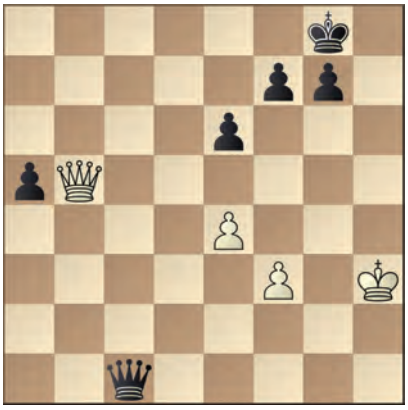
45...♕xh5 46 ♔f1

If 46 ♖xb6 ♕xf3.

46...b5 47 ♖c1 ♖xg2!?

Simplifying the position, but after 47...♕h2! White is so passively placed it is easy to nudge the pawns forward.

48 ♔xg2 ♕g5+ 49 ♔h3 ♖xd3 50 ♕xd3 ♕xc1 51 ♕xb5



My technique was far from impressive, but there isn't much hope here for White.

51...♕f4 52 ♔g2 ♕d2+ 53 ♔h3 ♕d8 54 ♕c6 g6 55 ♔g4 ♕d2 56 ♕b5 ♕c3 57 f4 ♔g7 58 e5 ♕d2 59 ♕a4 ♕b4 60 ♕d1 a4 61 ♕d8 ♕f8 62 ♕a5 ♕e8!

62...a3?! 63 ♔g3 leaves my queen awkwardly placed.

63 ♕a7 ♕c6 64 ♔h4

After 64 ♕e7 ♕a8 65 ♔g5 a3 66 ♕f6+ ♔g8 White doesn't have any threats.

64...♕e4 65 ♔g4 ♕f5+ 66 ♔g3 ♕d3+ 67 ♔h4 a3 68 ♕e7 a2 69 ♕a7 ♕d2 0-1

♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖

Notes by Luke McShane

It was an honour for England to be invited to the World Team Championships, on account of our fifth place at the Batumi Olympiad last year, so I was keen to perform well in Astana. Iran have a dangerous young squad, so I expected this match to be tough – all the more so since Gawain Jones had to rest due to illness. I felt somewhat below par myself that day, so I resolved to play cautiously. Playing 'for two results' with White is always a sound policy in a four board match, and here it worked out perfectly.

L.McShane-P.Idani
England vs Iran
Reti Opening

1 c4 e6 2 g3 d5 3 ♗g2 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 dxc4 5 ♕a4+ ♗d7 6 ♕xc4 c5 7 ♘e5 ♕c8 8 ♘c3

The sophisticated 8 ♕d3 is actually White's most popular move, to discourage Black from capturing on d7 with the queen.

8...♘c6 9 ♘xd7 ♕xd7

Bishops are better than knights. Here, Black has no lead in development or structural advantage, so the bishop-pair promises an edge. Still, Black develops smoothly with a solid position. Many players are happy to make this trade-off – a small concession for an easy path to the middlegame.

10 0-0 ♗e7 11 d3 ♖c8 12 ♗g5 ♘d4

Instead, 12...0-0 13 ♗xf6 forces a recapture with the pawn, since 13...♗xf6 14 ♕xc5! is a safe pawn to grab: 14...♘d4 15 ♕xa7 and Black has no follow-up.

13 a4 0-0

I was intending to meet 13...b6 with 14 e3 ♘c6 15 ♕b5!? with the idea of 15...0-0 16 a5 to put pressure on the queenside. 13...♘g4!? is an idea I didn't consider during the game. After 14 ♗f4 g5 15 ♗d2 ♘e5 16 ♕a2 h5!? things look quite unclear.

14 e3 ♘c6

Here I saw an opportunity to ditch the bishop-pair and gain a central pawn majority, by exchanging my b2-pawn for the c5-pawn.

15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6

15...gxf6 is a concession, but not a big one, so it might have been a better option.

16 ♘e4

My intended follow-up, although 16 ♕xc5 ♕xd3 17 ♖fd1 wasn't bad either.

16...♗xb2 17 ♖ab1

17 ♖a2!? is a cute idea from the engine. Now if Black plays 17...♘a5 then 18 ♕b5! wins material. Instead, 17...♗f6 18 ♘xc5 ♕e7 19 ♕b5 gives White a pleasant advantage like in the game.

17...♘a5 18 ♘xc5! ♕d6 19 ♕b4 ♗c3

Not 19...♖xc5? 20 d4! and White wins material, while 19...♕xc5 20 ♕xb2 is similar to the game. White will bring a rook to the c-file next.

20 ♕xc3 ♖xc5 21 ♕a3!

An important detail, as Black doesn't have time to get control of the c-file.

21...♕c7

21...♖fc8 22 d4 ♖5c6 23 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 24 ♗xb7 wins a clean pawn.

22 ♖fc1

Here too, 22...♖fc8 would drop a pawn on b7 after the exchanges on c5.

22...♖xc1+ 23 ♖xc1 ♕d7

White has the advantage, but Black intends ....♖f8-c8 to alleviate the pressure. After 24 ♕c3 b6 it isn't clear what to do about the pawn on a4. I was pleased when I found a neat solution:

24 ♕b4! b6 25 ♕b5!

Just 'poking' Black's queen away from c8, so Black's rook can't mount a challenge. Exchanging queens would leave the pawn on a7 very weak.

25...♕e7 26 d4 ♖d8 27 h4

A typical advance to slightly increase the pressure.

27...♘b7 28 ♗xb7

What the textbooks call a 'transformation of advantages'. In fact, during the game I wasn't sure if it was wise to give up my healthy bishop for this knight. However, I also wasn't sure how to arrange my pieces after ....♘d6, and taking the chance to advance my a-pawn looked like a nuisance for my opponent. Besides that, I was running short of time so I was happy with a slight simplification.

28...♕xb7 29 a5 g6

29...♕d5 makes things much worse: 30 ♕xd5 exd5 31 a6! and with ♖c1-c7 coming, Black has an awful endgame.

30 ♖c6 ♖c8!?

A decent practical decision, giving up a pawn to go into an endgame which is unpleasant, but by no means hopeless.

30...♖d5 31 a6! ♕e7 32 ♕c4 is the position I considered promising when I captured on b7. White intends to somehow invade with the queen and rook, using the b7-square as a 'hook' if necessary. 30...♖b8 31 a6! ♕d7 32 ♕c4 is even worse for Black, as the b-pawn is much too slow.

31 ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 32 axb6 axb6 33 ♕xb6

People sometimes assume that grandmasters know definitively whether such positions are winning or drawn. In fact, the best we can do is draw comparisons. In general queen and three pawns versus queen and two, all on one side, is quite drawish. However, adding two pawns each significantly increases White's winning chances, because there is a plan of creating a passed d-pawn, without exposing White's king.

33...♕a8 34 ♕b5 h5 35 ♕e5 ♕a1+ 36 ♔g2 ♕c3 37 ♕b8+ ♔g7 38 ♕e5+ ♔g8 39 e4 ♕b2

Maintaining the pin on the d-pawn makes it difficult for White to make progress.

40 ♕d6 ♕e2 41 ♕b8+ ♔g7 42 ♕f4 ♕d3 43 ♕e3 ♕c4 44 ♕d2?

An awful blunder (44 ♔f3 defends the e-pawn, and White can try to wiggle forward). Our captain Malcolm Pein spotted what both players had missed, and carefully disguised that fact!

44...♔f8?

Such double blunders seem most common when the flow of the game is all one way, so neither player even looks for active resources for the defending side.

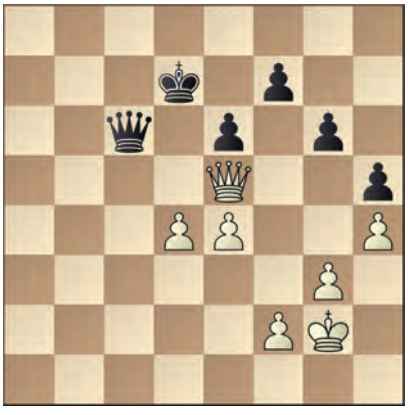
44...e5! wins a pawn on the spot. 45 d5 is a desperate attempt to avoid the draw, but after 45...♕xe4+ 46 f3 ♕f5 47 d6 ♕d7 48 ♕d5 ♔f6 Black has nothing to fear.

45 ♔h2? ♔e8?

OK, that's a quadruple, super-sized blunder. 45...e5 46 dxe5 ♕xe4 doesn't quite win a pawn, but Black is much closer to a draw here.

46 ♕b2

Now ♕b8+ is possible, so normal service resumes. **46...♕c6 47 ♕b8+ ♔e7 48 ♕e5 ♔d7 49 ♔g2**



49...f6?!

49...♕c3 still leaves it unclear how White should make progress. But that misses the point, as Black still has plenty to worry about. What about 50 ♕f4 followed by d4-d5? What about 50 ♕b5+, followed by offering a queen exchange on c5? Is the pawn ending a draw? Worrying about these things wears a defender down, so it is quite natural that Black tries to force matters.

50 ♕f4 f5?

50...♔e7 was still playable, but was clearly not Black's intention.

51 d5!

51 ♔f3 was my initial idea, as I didn't like allowing Black a dangerous passed d-pawn, but after some time it dawned on me that White's g-pawn will be just as fast.

51...exd5 52 exf5 d4+ 53 ♔h2 d3

After 53...gxf5 54 ♕xf5+ White will grab not the h-pawn, but rather grab the d-pawn or force an exchange of queens: for example, 54...♔d6 (or 54...♔d8 55 ♕f8+ ♔d7 56 ♕g7+) 55 ♕f6+ ♔c5 56 ♕xc6+ ♔xc6 57 ♔g2! ♔d5 58 ♔f3 ♔c4 59 ♔e2 and wins.

54 ♕d4+ ♕d6 55 ♕g7+ ♔c6 56 fxg6

This is the position I aimed for when playing 51 d5!. Black's exposed king helps White to gain a crucial tempo.

56...d2 57 ♕c3+ ♔b5 58 g7 1-0

When both sides promote, Black's king won't last long in the double queen ending.

♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖

The rest day did not prove so happy for both Sergey Karjakin who lost again, and as White to Arkadij Naiditsch, or to China who were unable to cash in against Egypt after Ahmed Adly continued a decent tournament by outplaying Wei Yi. That meant that China remained on just 50% and some four points behind Russia who led with 10/12, closely pursued by India (9), England (9), and the USA (8). Were England possibly on for bronze after all, or even something better?

Round 7 – England Go Clear Second

China	2½-1½	Sweden
England	2½-1½	Egypt
Kazakhstan	1½-2½	Iran
Azerbaijan	2-2	India
USA	1½-2½	Russia

Russia rested their out-of-form board one, but found the U.S. at their most solid on the top three boards. Once again, it was left to rising star Vladislav Artemiev to bring home the bacon, after Zviad Izoria overlooked a little trick in a queenless middlegame. Meanwhile England got off to a flyer against Egypt thanks to David Howell.

David Howell takes on Alexander Onischuk of the USA, who would hold the draw as Black. David had another excellent tournament for England, amassing 6/9 for individual bronze.

D.Howell-A.Fawzy
England vs Egypt
English Opening

1 ♘f3 c5 2 c4 ♘c6 3 e3 e5 4 ♘c3 d6?!

Allowing White to take over in the centre. There's a good reason why Maxime Vachier-Lagrave prefers to uphold 4...♘f6 5 d4 e4.

5 d4 cxd4 6 exd4 ♗g4 7 ♗e2 f5?!

This merely compounds matters. 7...♗xf3 8 ♗xf3 ♘xd4 9 ♗xb7 would have clearly favoured White too, so likely Black had to settle for solid but slightly passive development with 7...♗e7 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 ♗e3 0-0.

8 d5

Forcing the pace. 8 0-0 would also have been good, and if 8...e4? 9 ♘g5, or even 8 ♕a4!?.

8...♗xf3 9 gxf3!?

White wants an extra pawn with which to assault the black kingside.

9...♘ce7?!

Falling further behind in development, although even 9...♘d4 10 ♗e3 ♘xe2 11 ♕xe2 ♘f6 12 0-0-0 ♗e7 13 f4 e4 14 ♘b5!, as pointed out by our Executive Editor, would have been pretty grim for Black thanks to his light-square weaknesses.

10 h4

10 f4! might well have been even stronger, and if 10...exf4 (or 10...e4 11 ♘b5)

11 ♕a4+ ♔f7 (11...♕d7? 12 ♘b5! is very strong) 12 ♗xf4 ♘f6 13 0-0-0.

10...g6?! 11 h5 ♗h6 12 f4 ♘f6

Talk about a dream opening for White and now 12...♗xf4? 13 ♗xf4 exf4 14 ♕d4 would win a whole rook.

13 hxg6 ♗xf4

The Egyptian IM is already in dire straits, as 13...hxg6? 14 fxe5 exploits the open h-file.

14 ♗xf4 exf4 15 gxh7 ♕b6

16 ♕b3

A simple approach. White might also have won by force with 16 ♖h6!, and if 16...♕xb2 (or 16...♖xh7 17 ♖xf6 ♖h1+ 18 ♗f1) 17 ♖c1 ♘e4 18 ♗h5+ ♔d7 19 ♘xe4 fxe4 20 c5! dxc5 21 ♕g4+ (Pein).

16...♕d4?

Now Black will lose pretty much by force after all, although surely even after 16...♕xb3 17 axb3 a6 18 ♔d2 ♖xh7 19 ♖xh7 ♘xh7 20 ♖h1 ♘f8 21 ♗h5+ ♔d7 22 ♖g1 he wouldn't have survived in the long run.

17 ♘b5 ♕b6 18 ♕c3 ♔f7 19 ♗h5+! ♘xh5 20 ♖xh5 ♖af8 21 0-0-0

Black has been completely outplayed and David is now quick to finish him off.

21...♕xf2 22 ♘xd6+ ♔g6 23 ♖hh1 ♕e3+ 24 ♔c2 ♕xc3+ 25 ♔xc3 ♔g7 26 ♘xb7 ♘g6

It's White's mobile pawns which decide proceedings after 26...♖xh7 27 ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 28 d6 ♘c6 29 b4.

27 d6 ♘e5 28 d7 ♘f7 29 c5 1-0

Once again, Gawain Jones ground – and well. Luke McShane was, however, held by Ahmed Adly, who was having his best tournament in many a year, while Michael Adams unfortunately became the second player in Astana to overlook a queen-trapping ...g5 advance. That cost him a piece and, despite heroic resistance, ultimately the game against Bassem Amin, who will be starring in the first Grand Chess Tour event of 2019 in the Ivory Coast this month.

Elsewhere India lost ground on England as all four games of their match with Azerbaijan were drawn, while China's hopes of a late charge seemingly remained slim, despite a narrow victory. The well-prepared Swedish side held them on the top three boards, although by means of borrowing Gawain Jones's favourite ...♘bd7 line of the Classical King's Indian, Ni Hua did manage to overcome IM Linus Johansson.

Round 8 – The Dragon Awakens

Sweden	½-3½	Russia
India	2-2	USA
Iran	2-2	Azerbaijan
Egypt	2½-1½	Kazakhstan
China	3-1	England

Come the money rounds and it was clear that the Russians really meant business. Sergey Karjakin was restored to their line-up to draw with Nils Grandelius, but elsewhere the Russians were absolutely merciless. Alexander Grischuk crashed through in the centre to overpower Hans Tikkanen's French Defence, while Dmitry Andreikin and Vladislav Artemiev smoothly outplayed, and quite quickly at that, Erik Blomqvist and Axel Smith respectively.

E.Blomqvist-D.Andreikin
Sweden vs Russia

29...b5!?

The standard idea in the Minority Attack, of course, and it turns out that Black need not fear the exchange on a4.

30 ♗xa4?! It was better to sit tight and improve the white knight with 30 ♘b3 followed by ♘c1 and ♘d3.

30...bxa4 31 b4?

Lashing out merely accelerates White's demise. 31 ♖e1 ♖b8 32 ♘f1 f4 would have been unpleasant for him, even after 33 ♕c2 ♕d7!? 34 ♕xa4 ♖xb2 35 ♕xa6 ♔g7, but much better to obtain an active queen than destroy one's own queenside.

31...axb3 32 ♖xb3 ♘a5 33 ♖b4 ♕c7 34 ♘b3 ♘c6

It transpires that Black can do even better than invade after 34...♘xb3 35 ♖xb3 ♕c4.

35 ♖a4 ♕b6 36 ♕c2 ♕b5 37 ♘c5 ♖e1+ 38 ♔f2 ♕f1+ 39 ♔g3 ♖e2 0-1

The big news, however, of the penultimate round was that the Chinese Dragon finally decided to roar and show its full power, unfortunately for the English team. Michael Adams had done well to create sufficient counterplay as Black against Ding Liren, but slightly lost his way around the time control, after which the world no.3 displayed some fine technique. David Howell also saw his position collapse in a time scramble against Wei Yi, which meant that as Luke McShane and Gawain Jones never had very much against Yu Yangyi and Bu Xiangzhi respectively, Russia had won gold with a round to spare.

England were down to third in the rankings, albeit with Sweden left to play, whereas second-placed India had to face Russia. The Indians were largely impressive in Astana, if perhaps slightly fortunate in round 8 after Baskaran Adhiban had to fight like a demon to save a piece-down and likely lost endgame against Darius Swiercz.

Jon Speelman travelled to Astana to support the England team on the preparation front, but he also had to stand in for Malcolm as captain in the early rounds and even play against Iran. It was Jon's fourth appearance in the World Team Championship after playing in 1985, 1989 and 1997.

Round 9 – Cometh the Hour, England Deliver

England	3½-½	Sweden
Kazakhstan	1½- 2½	China
Azerbaijan	2½-1½	Egypt
USA	3-1 I	ran
Russia	2½-1½	India

Russia rested their double gold-medal-winning star Vladislav Artemiev, but didn't slip up against India. Eventually Ian Nepomniachtchi managed to draw, as did Sergey Karjakin and Dmitry Andreikin, which left Alexander Grischuk to gradually reel in the full point against S.P. Sethuraman.

Notes by Jonathan Speelman

After England had finished against Sweden, we still had to wait and see whether India could beat the already crowned champions Russia to take the silver medal. Half way through that match this seemed perfectly plausible as Surya Shekhar Ganguly had an extra piece against Ian Nepomniachtchi and the game below certainly wasn't a shoe in for Alexander Grischuk. However, 'Nepo' carried out a brilliant defence and Grischuk won, so in the end India actually lost to Russia and were unlucky to finish fourth behind bronze medallists China.

A.Grischuk-S.Sethuraman
Russia vs India
Ragozin Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♗b4 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♗g5 h6 7 ♗h4

The macho move (rather than 7 ♗xf6), allowing numerous different extremely complicated lines after ...c5 or ...g5.

7...0-0 8 e3 ♗f5 9 ♕b3 ♗xc3+ 10 ♕xc3 g5

Quite a maximalist move, preparing to offer the c-pawn.

11 ♗g3 ♘e4 12 ♕xc7 ♕xc7 13 ♗xc7 ♘c6

Black has a serious lead in development, but by exchanging off one of his bishops White is able to cope.

14 ♗b5

14 ♘d2 may be better in theoretical terms, but especially in a team tournament you'd want to attempt to keep more control, as Grischuk's choice does. After 14...♘b4 15 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 16 ♔d1 ♖fc8 17 ♗a5 ♘d3 18 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 19 ♖c1 (if 19 ♔d2 ♗e4 20 ♖hc1 ♗xg2) 19...♖xc1+ 20 ♔xc1 ♖c8+ 21 ♗c3 White is a pawn up, but Black has whittled things down to just opposite-coloured bishops and a pair of rooks.

14...♖fc8 15 ♗xc6 bxc6

15...♖xc7 16 ♗xd5 looks like too many pawns.

16 ♗a5 ♖ab8

Given that Grischuk's next move radically prevents it, you have to wonder whether 16...c5 would have been a good idea, but after 17 dxc5 ♖xc5 (if 17...♘xc5 18 0-0 ♘d3 19 ♗c3 ♖ab8 20 ♘d4 ♗g6 21 ♘b3 a5 22 ♘xa5 ♘xb2 23 ♗e5) 18 ♘d4! ♖ac8 19 ♗d2 ♗g6 (not 19...♘xd2? 20 ♘xf5) White is well in control following 20 ♖d1, but not 20 f3? ♘xd2 21 ♔xd2 ♖c2+ when Black is extremely active and White discoordinated.

17 b4 ♘d6 18 ♘d2 ♘b7 19 ♘b3 ♗c2 20 ♘c5 ♘xc5 21 dxc5

The start of a very interesting late middlegame/endgame. Unless Black can do something immediately – which he can't really – then White will eventually be able to consolidate, but steering his undoubted advantage to victory will be extremely difficult.

21...♖e8

In positions like this the control of squares is vital and it's very possible that 21...♗a4 was better, to prevent White from playing White playing a2-a4 himself which gives him control of b5, creating the break b4-b5 which Black has to police for the rest of the game.

22 a4 ♗f5 23 0-0-0 ♖e4 24 ♖d4 ♖xd4

I guess that he'll have to play this anyhow in the next few moves because White will in any case get in ♔d2 and f3, and if the rook retreats, h2-h4 will put a lot of strain on the black kingside. However, after the exchange of rooks it will certainly not be possible to keep the white bishop offside on a5 which Black would like to do in an ideal world.

25 exd4 ♗d7 26 ♔d2 ♖e8

I'm not sure that this was a very good idea because now the bishop can jump out of its cage.

27 ♗c7 f6 28 f3 a6

Grischuk now has a clear extra pawn, but a lot of work is still required, if indeed it's winnable at all against 'perfect defence'. With everything adequately defended for the moment, his plan – at least what he eventually did – was to eliminate most or all of the kingside, so that his rook could get in to attack the enemy queenside. ♖a7 would be almost always be fatal if achieved and with the rook on the sixth rank there are possibilities of playing b4-b5 at some moment when c5-c6 is supported. I would definitely now be choosing between 29 h4 and 29 g4.

29 g4

It's possible that he played g2-g4 first to avoid 29 h4 g4, although 30 h5 here looks nice even if it doesn't open lines for the rook.

29...♔g7 30 ♖c1 ♖e6 31 h3 ♔f7 32 ♗g3 ♗e8 33 ♗f2 ♗d7 34 ♗e3 ♔g7 35 f4 gxf4

I think this helps White, so perhaps Black should have kept the kingside closed, as with 35...♖e4 36 f5 h5 37 ♖g1 hxg4 38 hxg4 ♔g8 39 ♔e2 ♔g7 40 ♔f3 ♗e8 (40...♔g8? 41 ♖c1 and b5 is too quick) 41 ♖c1 ♖e7.

36 ♗xf4 ♔g6 37 ♗e3 ♔g7

Over the next few moves, Grischuk fiddles around or, as we grandmasters put it, manoeuvres. There are surely moments at which both sides could have improved, but eventually it worked out for him.

38 ♔e2 ♔g6 39 ♔f2 ♗e8 40 ♔e2 ♗d7 41 ♔f3 ♗e8 42 ♔f2 ♗d7 43 ♔e2 ♗e8 44 ♔d3 ♗d7 45 ♗d2 ♔g7 46 ♗f4 ♔g6 47 ♗g3 ♔g5 48 ♗e1 ♗e8 49 ♗d2+ ♔g6

49...♔h4 is obviously what Grischuk was daring Sethuraman to play, but it doesn't seem at all bad since Black gets very active, as shown by 50 ♗xh6 ♔xh3 51 g5 ♔g2 52 gxf6 ♖xf6 53 ♖e1 ♗d7 54 ♗g5 ♖f3+.

50 ♖f1 ♔g7 51 h4 ♗d7

52 g5

The break that White wants to make, but it shouldn't have worked especially well.

52...fxg5 53 hxg5 h5!

Black needs to keep some tension on the kingside, otherwise he will be squeezed without anything to play for. And this is a perfectly viable passed pawn.

54 ♗f4 ♔g6 55 ♗e5 ♗e8?!

After a long period of defence, Sethuraman fails to readjust and remains passive. Pushing the h-pawn looks perfectly OK. Grischuk would like to stop it with the bishop and king while activating his rook, but it doesn't seem possible: 55...h4 56 ♖h1 (or 56 ♔e3 h3 57 ♔f4 ♖e8 58 ♔g3 ♗f5) 56...h3 57 ♔e3 ♔xg5 58 ♖g1+ ♔f5! and Black should hold.

56 ♔e3 ♔xg5 57 ♖g1+ ♔h6?

57...♔f5 was much better. Now Sethuraman gets into serious difficulties again.

58 ♖g8 ♖e7

Instead, 58...h4!? 59 ♔f4 ♗g6 60 ♖h8+ (60 ♔g4? ♖e8) 60...♗h7 61 ♖a8 (and not 61 ♔g4? ♖g6+ 62 ♔xh4 ♖g8) 61...♖g6 (if 61...♗d3 62 ♔g4) 62 ♖xa6 h3 63 ♔f3 ♖g2 leads to a mess that I'd hate to play as White after having such control, but in fact White is totally winning: for instance, 64 ♖xc6+ ♔h5 65 b5 ♗e4+ 66 ♔e3 ♖g5 (or 66...h2 67 ♗xh2 ♖xh2 68 b6) 67 b6 (or simply 67 ♖c8 ♗h7 68 ♖h8 ♔g6 69 ♖f8) 67...♖xe5 68 b7!.

59 ♔f4 ♖f7+ 60 ♔g3 ♖e7 61 ♔h4 ♖e6 62 ♖h8+ ♔g6 63 ♖xh5

After eliminating the potentially dangerous h-pawn and with his pieces so active, White should now win.

63...♖e7 64 ♖g5+ ♔f7 65 ♔g4 ♔e6 66 ♖g8 ♔f7

Alternatively, 66...♔d7 67 ♔f5 ♖h7 68 ♗f6 ♖h5+ 69 ♗g5 ♖h7 70 ♔e5 ♖h5 71 ♖g7+ ♔c8 72 ♔d6 and – splat!

67 ♖h8 ♔g6 68 ♖f8 ♗d7+ 69 ♔g3 ♗e8 70 b5

The decisive break which Grischuk has been trying to engineer for nearly 50 moves. The passed c-pawn now wins a piece and with just a little care Grischuk was able to convert.

70...axb5 71 axb5 cxb5 72 c6 b4 73 c7 ♗d7 74 c8♕ ♗xc8 75 ♖xc8 ♖b7 76 ♔f4!

Of course it's correct to prevent the slightly annoying ...♔f5.

76...b3 77 ♖g8+ ♔h7 78 ♖g1 b2 79 ♖b1 ♔g6 80 ♔e3 ♔f5 81 ♔d3 ♖b5 82 ♔c3 ♖b7 83 ♖xb2 ♖h7 84 ♖e2 ♖e7 85 ♔b4 1-0

Here Sethuraman resigned. A very tough battle in which Grischuk won a pawn early on, but then had to work extremely hard to make progress. There were moments when Sethuraman had equalised, but by the time he reached them the defensive task had worn him down so much that he was unable to readjust and lapsed into miserable passivity. Both the fluctuating assessment and the final outcome were far from unexpected in a battle between flesh and blood opponents.

♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖

England exploited their opportunity to absolutely crush Sweden. Luke McShane came close to winning against Erik Blomqvist, but there was to be no mistake or heroic defence elsewhere, Michael Adams, David Howell and Gawain Jones all scoring good wins.

M.Adams-N.Grandelius

England vs Sweden

Sicilian Rossolimo

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 a4!?

A semi-trendy wrinkle and we soon reach an Open Sicilian-type position.

4...e6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2 b6 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♕xd4 ♗b7 9 0-0 ♘gf6 10 ♖d1 ♗e7 11 ♗e3 0-0 12 e5!

A key advance, making good use of the white queen's active location and preventing Black from continuing to arrange his pieces in classic Hedgehog fashion.

12...♗xf3 13 exd6 ♗xe2 14 ♘xe2 ♘d5 15 dxe7 ♕xe7 16 ♘c3 ♘xe3 17 ♕xe3

Thus far Grandelius has also played very sensibly and now 17...h6!? 18 ♖d2 ♖fb8 (this one, as 18...♖ab8 19 ♕e2 would send the rook back to a8) 19 ♖ad1 ♘f6 would have left him very close to full equality.

17...♖fd8? 18 ♘d5!

Suddenly Black finds himself in serious trouble, in view of 18...♕c5 19 ♕xc5 bxc5 20 ♘e7+ ♔f8 21 ♘c6 ♖dc8 22 ♖xd7 ♖xc6 23 ♖ad1 when White's rooks dominate and leave him clearly for choice. As such, Grandelius prefers to offer a pawn for some activity.

18...♕f8! 19 ♘xb6 ♘xb6 20 ♕xb6 ♖db8 21 ♕d4 ♖b4 22 ♕e5 ♕c8

Black clearly has some compensation and Adams now elects to return the extra pawn. Incidentally, I see that my luft-loving engine touts 23 h3!?, and if 23...♕xc2 24 ♕d6 ♖bb8 25 b4 when Black will suffer, but likely should eventually be able to hold after 25...♖c8.

23 ♖d2 f6 24 ♕e2!

And naturally not 24 ♕c3? ♕xc3 25 bxc3 ♖b2 when White finds himself too tied down and his pawns to weak to undertake any real progress.

24...♖xb2 25 ♖ad1 ♔h8

25...♖ab8!? would have been more logical, although it does require Black to ditch a pawn with 26 ♖d7 ♖b1! 27 ♕xe6+ ♔h8. However, White is rather in a tangle here and 28 ♕e7 ♖xd1+ 29 ♖xd1 h6 30 ♕e4 f5 31 ♕d3 ♖b4 very likely to end in a draw.

26 h3

It was also possible to begin with 26 ♖d7, since c2 is taboo due to Black's back rank, and only then go 26...♖ab8 27 h3.

26...h6 27 ♖d6!

27...♖ab8!

Good play from both sides. Of course, 27...♕xc2?? 28 ♖6d2! would have won a major piece, while 27...♖xc2?? fails to 28 ♖d8+ ♕xd8 29 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 30 ♕xc2.

28 ♖1d2 ♖2b6 29 ♖d7 ♖6b7 30 ♖7d6 ♖b6 31 c4!?

Adams begins to probe and wants to keep pieces on. The alternative was, of course, 31 ♖d7 ♖6b7 32 ♕xe6, but after 32...♖xd7 33 ♖xd7 ♕xc2 Black should be able to hold. White does have 34 ♕xa6 ♕c1+ 35 ♕f1 ♕c2 36 ♕d3 ♕xa4 37 ♖xg7! ♔xg7 38 ♕g3+ ♔h7 39 ♕xb8, but this should really just be quite an easy draw for Black.

31...♖xd6

White's last move actually didn't threaten anything immediately, so it was also possible to wait with 31...a5!?.

32 ♖xd6 e5?

Far too materialistic. Grandelius no doubt spotted 32...♖b1+ 33 ♔h2 ♕c7? 34 ♕xe6 ♖d1 35 c5, but here Black can do much better with 33...♖b6! 34 ♖xb6 ♕c7+ 35 ♔g1 ♕xb6. After, say, 36 c5 ♕xc5 37 ♕xa6 ♕c1+ 38 ♕f1 ♕c3 39 g3 e5 White retains definite winning chances, but Black should likely be able to hold.

33 ♕e4

This is the problem. White now dominates the board and Black's back rank once again becomes an issue.

Gawain Jones also played a very important role for England, only losing against India, while winning four games. Gawain looks at two of his most instructive endgames later in these pages.

33...a5 34 ♖d5 ♕c7 35 g3

In trademark fashion Adams is in no rush, first tidying the kingside ahead of pushing the c-pawn.

35...♖c8 36 c5 ♕b8

Active defence with 36...♕e7!? and if 37 ♕c4 e4 was likely the last chance.

37 ♕f5 ♕b7 38 ♖d6 ♕c7 39 c6 ♕b8 40 h4!

Adams continues to mercilessly turn the screw. Black won't be able to both halt the c-pawn and defend his kingside for long.

40...♕c7 41 ♕e6 ♔h7 42 h5 ♕b8

One final desperate try. Black has been completely outmanoeuvred as we can see too from 42...♖g8 43 ♖d7 and 42...♔h8 43 ♖d7! ♕xc6 44 ♖d8+ ♔h7 45 ♕g8#.

43 ♖d7 ♕b1+ 44 ♔h2 ♖f8 45 ♕g4 ♖g8 46 c7 ♕b6 47 ♖xg7+! 1-0

India could perhaps feel slightly hard done by that after only losing for the first time in the final round, they were passed for the bronze medals by China, the final scores being:

1	Russia	16/18,
2	England	13,
3	China	12,
4	India	11,
5	USA	11,
6	Iran	8,
7	Azerbaijan	8,
8	Kazakhstan	4,
9	Sweden	4,
10	Egypt	3.

Meanwhile individual gold medals went to Baskaran Adhiban (India, board one, 6/9), Luke McShane (England, board two, 6/9), Surya Shekhar Ganguly (India, board three, 7/9), Alireza Firouzja (Iran, board four, 7/9), and Vladislav Artemiev (Russia, board five, 6½/8). To the delight of English fans, David Howell's fine 6/9 was enough to bag a bronze on board three, while Gawain Jones even claimed silver with his 5½/8 on board 4. Our congratulations to Luke, Gawain and David, as well as to team-leader Michael Adams, who chipped in with some important wins when required, analyst and reserve Jon Speelman, and England captain, our Executive Editor no less, Malcolm Pein.

That all just left time for the prize-giving and a slightly curious press conference, in which Alexander Grischuk, despite being seated next to Sergey Karjakin, refused to even slightly praise his team leader, while being unsurprisingly happy to heap praise on Vladislav Artemiev. The mercurial Muscovite then continued to stun journalists present by revealing that he badly feels the Candidates tournament needs to return to being a knockout style event.

Grischuk really let rip when he announced that the current all-play-all system: "Encourages prearranged games, fixed games, rigged games, whatever you call it." He clarified this: "I don't think it's going to happen more than once every three, four Candidates tournaments, but it's such a bad thing that I think it just kills everything, even if it happens so rarely." Definite food for thought...

A little bird just told me

A round-up of what the top players and chess personalities have been saying on Twitter

Hikaru Nakamura - @GMHikaru
What a truly special feeling to turn back the clock and win so many must games in order to become the 2019 US Chess Champion!! Big should out to the amazing twitch community from whom I drew so much inspiration!

Susan Polgar - @SusanPolgar
This young lady has a great future ahead of her. At 17, she already won Gold at World Youth, Bronze at Olympiad, one of the most dominating performances in recent US Women's Championship history & completed all IM norms! Congratulations Jennifer! @USChess @STLChessClub @WOMChess

Gawain Jones - @GMGawain
Great team performance in Astana at #WTCC2019 as England get silver! Luke with a fantastic gold individual medal on board 2, David a bronze on 3 and I managed a second silver on 4. Evidently medals trigger security, but staff at Frankfurt seemed impressed.

2700chess - @2700chess
Artemiev (2754.4, World #13) wins the European Individual Championship with 8.5/11, increasing his unbeaten streak in classical chess to 49 games.

David Howell - @DavidHowellGM
So I don't pay much attention to Elo ratings these days, but a friend just made me aware of the new April list. When I retire it will be nice to say that I was (briefly) number 1 in the UK :)

Reza Mahdipour - @Rez7a
15-year-old Alireza Firouzja's LIVE rating: 2670.2!

Magnus Carlsen - @MagnusCarlsen
Today, we made a #MoveForEquality. @anishgiri and I broke a rule and black started instead of white. Through chess, we can give a new perspective to the worldwide discussion about how we can build a world where opportunity is equal.

David Barker - @d_barker
Two years ago met with @TelegraphChess and @schoolschess and talked about a schools chess tournament @cityoflondon - today became a reality thanks to @LizGreenWCFK launching the Sheriff's Chess Challenge @guildhall in partnership with City of London Corporation :-) #skills

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The likely lads. Unsurprisingly the England team were in good spirits come the prize giving in Astana, where they would receive the silver medals and also pick up three individual medals. It was quite simply a most impressive result and fully built on a fine fifth place finish at Batumi.

Forthcoming Events

May 2 **Hendon 'First Thursday' Blitz**
www.hendonchessclub.com or call 07855 036537

May 3-5 **Cornwall Congress, Falmouth**
www.cornwallchess.org.uk or call 01209 217210

May 4-6 **4NCL, Telford, Daventry & Bolton**
www.4ncl.co.uk or call 01993 708645

May 10-12 **Harrogate Congress**
castlechess.co.uk or call 01707 659080

May 10-12 **Rhyl Congress**
www.rhylandprestatynchessclub.com or call 07983 671753

May 11 **Golders Green Rapidplay**
goldersgreenchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

May 17-19 **Frome Congress**
somersetchess.org/frome_congress/FromeHome.html

May 18-19 **Hampstead U2200 Congress**
hampsteadchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

May 19 **Crewe Rapidplay**
www.crewechessclub.co.uk

May 21 **Muswell Hill Rapidplay**
muswellhillchess.blogspot.co.uk or call 07855 036537

May 24-27 **4NCL Spring Bank Holiday Congress, Basingstoke**
www.4ncl.co.uk or call 01993 708645

May 24-26 **Ayr Congress**
www.chessscotland.com or call 01772 434060

May 24-26 **Huddersfield Congress**
congress.huddersfieldchess.org.uk or call 01484 352989

May 25-27 **City of Belfast Championships**
ulsterchess.org or call 07872 544868

May 25-27 **Cotswold Congress, Cheltenham**
cotswoldcongress.co.uk or call 01242 253996

May 25 **Poplar Rapidplay**
www.spanglefish.com/docklandschessclub

May 31 - June 2 **EACU Congress, Newmarket**
email: richard@fcasolutions.co.uk or call 01908-234014

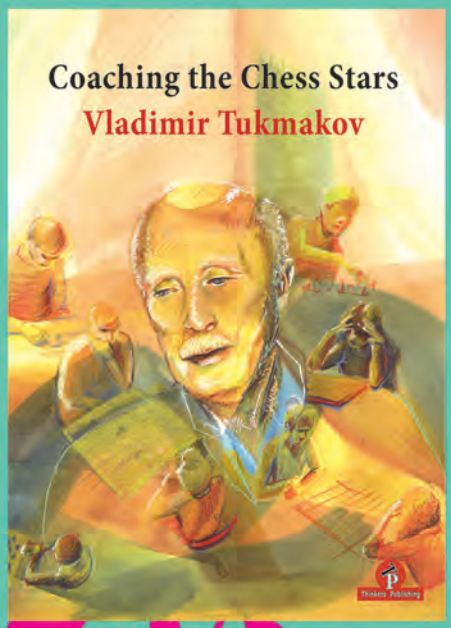
And for the Online Connoisseur:

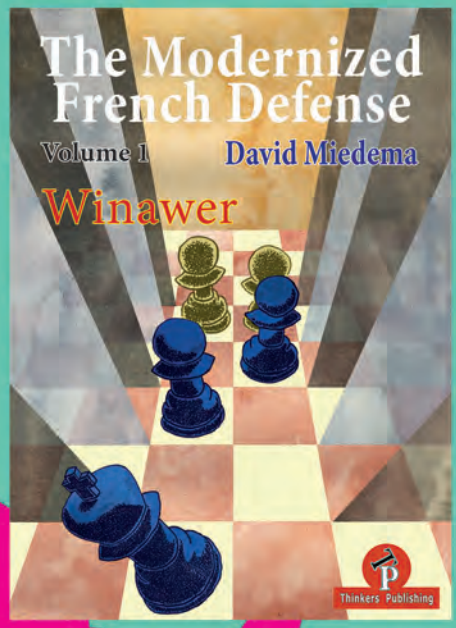
May 3-9 **TePe Sigeman & Co, Malmo**
tepesigemanchess.com; Grandelius, Hillarp Persson, Jones, etc.

May 6-13 **Grand Chess Tour, Abidjan**
grandchesstour.com; Carlsen, Nakamura, So, Vachier-Lagrave, etc

May 16-30 **Grand Prix Knockout, Moscow**
fide.com; Aronian, Giri, Grischuk, Mamedyarov, Svidler, etc.

Congress organisers – Don't forget to email editor@chess.co.uk to ensure your event is listed, or if you really want to guarantee a good entry, contact Matt@chess.co.uk to discuss having it advertised.





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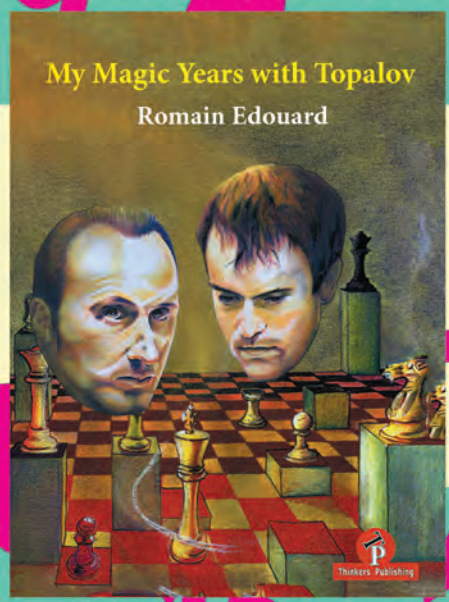

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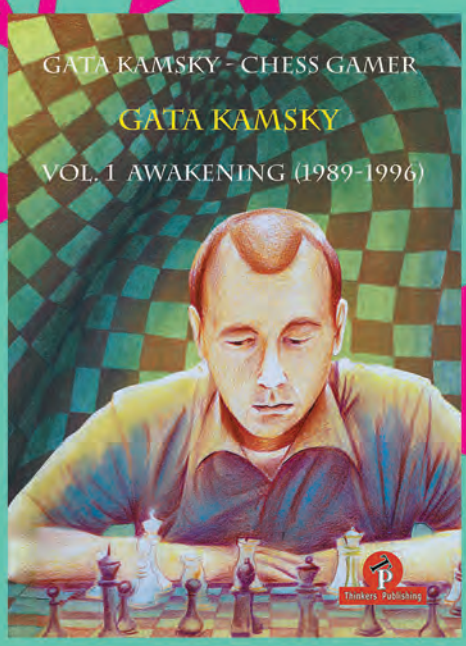

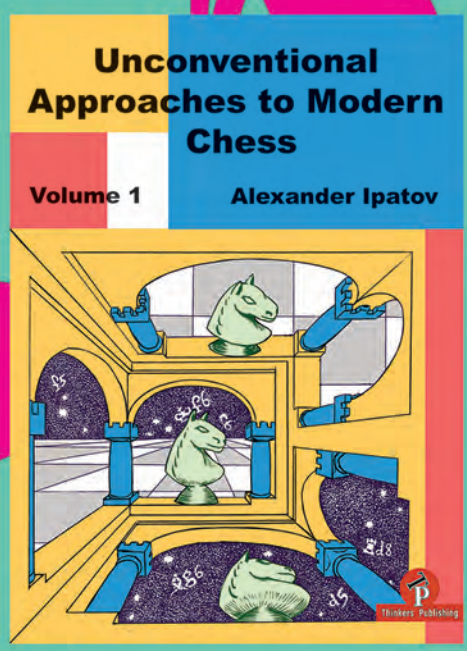

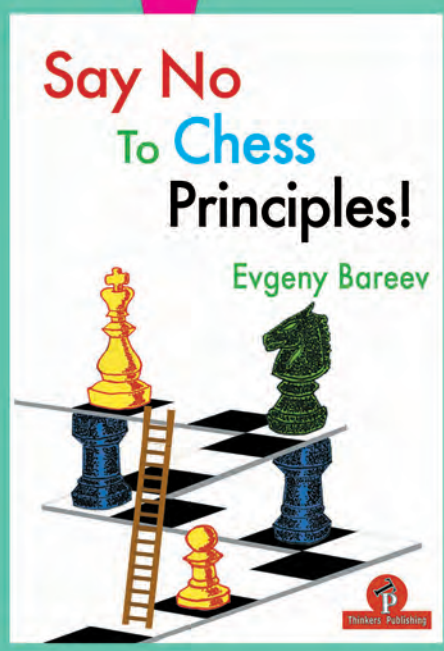

The Old and the New

Hikaru Nakamura and Jennifer Yu triumphed at the 2019 U.S. Championships

He infamously failed to win a single classical game en route to Grand Chess Tour glory, then unusually failed to impress at the Gibraltar Open, but aided by a short break and demolishing Jan-Krzysztof Duda in the Champions Showdown, Hikaru Nakamura was back to his best and at classical chess no less in the U.S. Championship.

Possibly Nakamura arrived in Saint Louis worried about falling 100 points behind Carlsen on the rating list or below the new recruit to the American team, Leinier Dominguez Perez, but whatever the reason, he would win his fifth U.S. title, holding off a strong and sustained challenge from both Dominguez Perez and Fabiano Caruana.

Caruana began with four draws which prompted the world champion to quip on Twitter that Caruana's age matched his drawing sequence. Nakamura too wasn't exactly quick out of the gate, finding himself on 3/5, courtesy of four draws, including with Caruana and So, while smoothly outplaying Sam Sevian. It was then time to up the ante, a reversed Grünfeld proved just the tonic for maintaining control against Timur Gareyev before the Modern helped Nakamura to another smooth win.

V.Akobian-H.Nakamura
Round 7
Modern Defence

1 d4 d6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 c4 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 ♘c6!? 5 d5 ♘e5 6 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 7 e4 ♘f6 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 0-0 e6

Nakamura continues to make capital of his bishop being on e5. Now the position takes on definite Modern Benoni characteristics, albeit with the black pawn on c7 not c5.

10 h3 exd5 11 cxd5 ♘h5 12 f4

A tad risky, if consistent with the decision to eschew 11 exd5. Instead, 12 ♘e2 c6 13 ♖b1 cxd5 14 exd5 ♖e8 seems quite pleasant for Black.

12...♗d4+ 13 ♔h2 ♕h4 14 ♕e1?

Too meek. Akobian was likely scared by 14 ♕f3 g5 15 fxg5 ♗e5+ 16 ♔g1 ♘g3 followed by ...f6, but now he gets into definite trouble.

14...♕xe1 15 ♖xe1 ♗f2 16 ♖f1 ♗g3+ 17 ♔g1 f5!

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www.chess.co.uk

The problem. White's proud centre is being demolished and f4 is especially weak.

18 ♖f3 ♗xf4! 19 ♗xf4 fxe4 20 ♗xe4

20 ♘xe4!? ♖xf4 21 ♖c1 would have been more active and after, say, 21...♖xf3 22 gxf3 ♘f4 23 ♗f1 ♘xd5 24 ♗c4 c6 25 ♘f6+ ♔g7 26 ♘xd5 cxd5 27 ♗xd5 White might manage to hold despite his structure.

20...♘xf4 21 ♖af1 g5 22 h4?

Tempting, but once again Nakamura has seen the deeper into the position.

22...♗g4! 23 ♖g3 h5 24 hxg5 ♖ae8 25 ♗f3 ♖e5

Black will now regain his pawn or enter a highly favourable rook endgame.

26 ♗xg4 hxg4 27 ♖xg4 ♘xd5 28 ♘xd5 ♖xf1+ 29 ♔xf1 ♖xd5 30 ♔e2 ♔g7 31 ♖c4 c6 32 ♖e4 ♔g6 33 ♖e7 ♖b5

Note how Black's rook defends his queenside from the front and his king is also active. Nakamura converted instructively:

34 b3 ♔xg5 35 ♖d7 d5 36 ♔d3 ♔f6 37 ♔c3 a5 38 ♖c7 ♔e6 39 a3 d4+! 40 ♔c4 d3 41 ♔c3 d2 42 ♔xd2 ♖xb3 43 g4 a4 44 g5 ♔d6 45 ♖f7 b5 46 g6 ♖xa3 47 g7 ♖g3 0-1

Nakamura actually got nowhere with his final two whites, against Shankland and Dominguez Perez, but remained in hot form as Black. Gone were his regular recent choices of the QGD and 1...e5, instead the Leningrad Dutch enabled him to create imbalance and outplay Jeffery Xiong in the final round. Two days earlier he had returned to the Dragon, and the Chinese variation no less.

R.Robson-H.Nakamura
Round 9
Sicilian Dragon

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♕d2 ♘c6 9 ♗c4 ♗d7 10 0-0-0 ♖b8!? 11 ♗b3 ♘a5 12 ♗h6 ♗xh6 13 ♕xh6 b5 14 ♘d5 ♘xb3+ 15 ♘xb3

Thematic play thus far from both sides, as is Black's next, swapping weaknesses to keep White's mini initiative under control.

15...e5! 16 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 17 h4 ♖b6 18 h5 ♕e7 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 ♕e3 ♗e6 21 ♖hf1?

The game might have become a manoeuvring battle, but one slow move from Robson is all that Nakamura needs to whip up a strong initiative. 21 ♔b1 would have been better, and if 21...♕c7 (or 21...♖c6 22 ♘a5 ♖a6 23 b4!?) 22 ♕g5 ♖c8 23 c3 followed by ♖h6 or 23...b4 24 ♖c1.

21...♖c6 22 f4 ♕c7! 23 ♖d2 a5

Suddenly White finds himself facing a rather scary-looking attack.

24 ♔b1 a4 25 ♘c1 b4 26 ♖df2 exf4 27 ♖xf4 ♖c8 28 ♖f6?!

Robson is now out calculated, but was simply in serious trouble in any case, as shown too by 28 ♕f3 ♕e7 29 ♘d3 ♖xc2 30 ♘xb4 ♖d2.

28...♖xc2!! 29 ♖xe6 ♕c4 30 ♖ef6 a3

Threatening 31...♖xb2+ 32 ♔a1 ♖b1+!.

31 bxa3 bxa3 32 ♕xa3 ♖xc1+! 33 ♖xc1

♕xe4+ 34 ♔b2 ♕e5+

The whole point of the combination, regaining the rook and leaving Black with a huge advantage in the endgame.

35 ♖c3 ♖b8+ 36 ♔c2 ♕xf6 37 ♖f3 ♕d4 38 ♖b3 ♕e4+ 39 ♔c1 ♕e1+ 40 ♔c2 ♕e2+ 41 ♔b1 ♕d1+

This wins a second pawn. 41...♕d3+ 42 ♔a1 ♕d1+ 43 ♔b2 ♖c8 would have been even more crushing.

42 ♕c1 ♖xb3+ 43 axb3 ♕xb3+ 44 ♔a1 ♕a4+ 45 ♔b2 ♕b5+ 46 ♔a1 ♕c5 47 ♕d2 h5 48 ♔b1 ♔g7 49 ♕b2+ ♕e5 50 ♕b7+ ♔h6 51 ♔c1 d5 52 ♔d1 ♕e4 53 ♕b2 ♔g5 54 ♕d2+ ♔g4 55 ♕h6 g5 0-1

After Dominguez couldn't convert an extra piece in the final round against Gareyev (the Blindfold King averaged some 72 moves per game, including holding rook against rook and bishop against Sevian, but then failing to do so against Caruana), and with Caruana unable to ever really get anywhere against Shankland, Hikaru Nakamura was able to celebrate landing the $50,000 first prize.

Chess fans could delight in the return of the win-seeking Nakamura, even if there were still fewer risks taken than there used to be. On the other hand, the unexpected victory of 17-year-old Jennifer Yu in the Women's Championship reminded some of the fearless play of the teenage Nakamura. Yu's games tended to begin quite classically, but by move 20 she had normally produced her first powerplay. 10 moves of so later, Yu tended to have a serious positional or material plus, or her sights firmly set on the opposition king.

Hikaru Nakamura pictured en route to accurately converting a rook and knight endgame against Jeffery Xiong in the final round in Saint Louis, which would give him his fifth U.S. title.

A.Zatonskih–J.Yu
Round 10
Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 dxc4 5 a4 ♗f5 6 ♘e5 ♘bd7 7 ♘xc4 ♕c7 8 g3 e5 9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 ♗f4 ♘fd7 11 ♗g2 f6 12 0-0 ♖d8 13 ♕c1 ♗e6 14 ♘e4 ♗b4 15 ♖d1 0-0 16 ♖d4 a5 17 h4!?

Both sides have developed along logical lines and trailing Yu by half a point, Zatonskih deploys *AlphaZero*'s favourite advance. However, 17 ♕c2 would have been more circumspect and likely stronger, with the simple idea of ♖ad1 and ♘cd6.

17...♘c5!? 18 ♖xd8

18 ♘xe5! ♘b3! (and not 18...fxe5? 19 ♖xb4!) 19 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 20 ♕xc6 bxc6 21 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 22 ♖b1 ♘d4 would have left Black with some play for her pawn.

18...♕xd8 19 ♘xc5?! ♗xc5

White is drifting and Zatonskih's next suggests that her danger alert had yet to be turned on in this critical encounter.

20 ♘xe5? ♗xf2+!

Ouch. 21 ♔xf2? fxe5 leaves the white king exposed, but even on h2 it won't be completely happy.

21 ♔h2 fxe5 22 ♗xe5 ♗d4 23 ♗f4 ♕b6 24 ♕c2 ♗b3?! 25 ♕c1?

Meek. Black's last likely wasn't the best and 25 ♕e4 or 25 ♕d3 followed by ♗e4 or 25...♖d8 26 ♗c7! would have offered White some counterplay.

25...♕b4 26 ♗d2 ♕d6 27 ♗f4 ♕b4 28 ♗d2 ♕e7 29 ♗c3 ♗e3 30 ♕e1?

30 ♗d2 ♗xd2 31 ♕xd2 ♖f2 32 ♖f1! ♖xe2 33 ♕xa5 was the final chance.

30...♗f2 31 ♕d2 ♗xg3+! 32 ♔xg3 ♕c7+ 33 ♔g4 ♗e6+ 0-1

Black's queen will land on g6 to deliver mate.

Unsurprisingly Jennifer Yu had to ride her luck on the odd occasion, but to rack up a ginormous 10/11, to finish two and a half points ahead of the vastly more experienced and higher-rated Tatev Abrahamyan and Anna Zatonskih was most impressive. Moreover, it suggests that Yu is not just something of a late developer by modern standards (she scored 2½, 5, 6 and 6½/11 in her previous U.S. Championship appearances), but might well be something special.

2019 U.S. Championship - Saint Louis, MI, USA - 18th March - 1st April 2019 (Category 18 = 2682 Elo average)

	Player	Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Pts	TPR
1	Hikaru Nakamura	2746	*	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	8	2851
2	Leinier Dominguez Perez	2739	½	*	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	7½	2810
3	Fabiano Caruana	2828	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	7½	2802
4	Wesley So	2762	½	½	½	*	½	½	0	½	1	½	1	½	6	2711
5	Sam Sevian	2642	0	0	½	½	*	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	6	2721
6	Sam Shankland	2731	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	0	½	½	1	½	5½	2677
7	Awonder Liang	2590	½	0	½	1	0	½	*	½	½	1	0	½	5	2654
8	Jeffery Xiong	2663	0	½	0	½	½	1	½	*	½	½	1	0	5	2648
9	Aleksandr Lenderman	2637	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	4	2584
10	Varuzhan Akobian	2625	0	½	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	*	½	1	4	2585
11	Timur Gareyev	2557	0	½	0	0	½	0	1	0	½	½	*	1	4	2591
12	Ray Robson	2667	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	1	½	0	0	*	3½	2550

Manx Derailed

It was looking like Guildford and Manx Liberty would both reach 10/10 ahead of facing off in the 4NCL, but that all changed after a lively eighth round

The 2016/17 4NCL season saw newcomers Manx Liberty finish second behind Manchester Manticores and gain promotion from Division Three North. Last season they became even stronger and won all 11 matches in Division Two ahead of racking up a further 100% in Pool B of Division One, including defeating Cheddleton. Everything seemed set for a final-round showdown for the league between champions Guildford and Manx, and then came round 8, the first of the Championship Pool.

Manx didn't field their regular trio of 2600s (Viktor Erdos, Constantin Lupulescu and Mircea-Emilian Parligras) in round 7 against Wood Green Monarchs and they remained absent in round 8. Despite that Manx still weighed in with an average rating of 2427 and were presumably confident of victory over White Rose. However, the Yorkshire side have a long history of causing notable upsets, drawing with Cheddleton last season and being the last but one team to defeat Guildford, back when they could still lose in 2012. White Rose also fielded a far from shabby side and got off to a flyer thanks to a crushing win for James Adair on board 3.

James Adair must enjoy the 4NCL. He has three GM norms from it and crushed Laszlo Gonda.

J.Adair-L.Gonda
White Rose vs Manx Liberty
Giuoco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 0-0 ♘f6 5 d3 h6 6 c3 d6 7 ♖e1 0-0 8 ♘bd2 a5 9 ♘f1 ♗e6 10 ♗b5 ♘e7 11 ♘g3

Deviating from a game played just the week before which featured 11 d4 – see this month's *How Good is Your Chess*?.

11...♘g6 12 h3 d5?!

A thematic break, but perhaps not the most logical follow-up to the knight manoeuvre to g6. Instead, 12...c6 would be pretty sensible and 13 ♗a4 b5 14 ♗c2 a4 (before White gets in a2-a4) 15 d4 ♗b6 followed by ...♖e8 would have been quite solid for Black.

13 exd5 ♘xd5 14 ♘xe5!

James Adair is an excellent calculator and realises that he can snaffle the central pawn.

14...♗xf2+

The point of Black's play. 14...♘xe5?! 15 d4 would just leave White fully in control.

15 ♔xf2 ♘xe5 16 d4 ♘g6

16...♕f6+!? 17 ♔g1 ♕h4 was a more active and perhaps better defence. After 18 ♖xe5 ♕xg3 19 ♕d3 ♕xd3 20 ♗xd3 White has the two bishops, but Black is very solidly placed with 20...c6.

17 ♕f3

Played to avoid 17 ♔g1 ♘df4, although 18 ♗xf4 ♘xf4 19 ♕f3 would maintain a definite pull for White.

17...♘f6

The Hungarian GM begins to lose his way here. He should have preferred either 17...c6 or even 17...c5!?, and if 18 dxc5 ♕c7, thereby obtaining reasonable counterplay.

18 ♔g1 ♘h4?

A shot in the dark. The best defence was 18...♕d5, although White has a pleasant edge whether he trades queens or goes 19 ♕f1.

19 ♕f2 c6

19...♗d5 20 ♗f1 leaves Black with absolutely no attack and White all set to expand in the centre.

20 ♗d3 b5

Easy to criticise, but already the game was pretty much up for Black. White might have two unmoved pieces, but his bishops rake the enemy kingside and 20...♔h8 21 ♖e5! continues to leave Black badly short of a move.

21 ♗xh6!

Boom! 21...gxh6 22 ♕f4 would clean Black up, and if 22...♘d5 23 ♕xh6. Once again the fact that he can't retreat his knight to g6 without losing his bishop on e6 proves fatal.

21...♘d5 22 ♗d2 ♖e8 23 ♘e4!

Adair is ruthless. Not content with an extra pawn, he moves quickly in for the kill.

23...♘f5 24 ♘g5 ♕f6 25 ♖e5 ♘h6

25...g6 26 ♖ae1 followed by g2-g4 would have been overwhelming too.

26 ♕h4 ♗d7 27 ♖f1 ♕d8

All White's pieces are playing and unsurprisingly he has a game-ending shot.

28 ♗h7+ ♔h8 29 ♗g6! 1-0

Completing the rout. Black either loses his queen to the fork or is mated by 29...♔g8 30 ♗xf7+ ♘xf7 31 ♕h7+ ♔f8 32 ♖xf7#.

Pawel Jaracz and Dietmar Kolbus won on 5 and 6 for Manx, against Sam Chow and Paul Townsend respectively, but they never really looked like winning the match. Manx had to suffer to hold the top two boards against Peter Wells and your Editor, with White Rose eventually triumphing 4½-3½ in a long match. Those key wins came on boards 7 and 8 where Tim Wall outplayed WGM Barbara Jaracz, while Sue Maroroa did well to turn around her game against Baard Dahl of PokerStars fame.

Elsewhere in the Championship Pool Guildford supremo Roger Emerson gave himself a game on board 8 for Guildford II in the derby. Emerson would be ground down in trademark fashion by Mark Hebden, while on the top boards Gawain Jones outplayed Yang-Fan Zhou in a sharp position in the run-up to move 40 and Luke McShane demonstrated that even after offering an early queen exchange, one can still attack.

G.Sarakauskas-L.McShane
Guildford II vs Guildford I
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 ♘xe4 5 ♕e2 ♘d6 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 ♕xe5+ ♕e7 8 ♕a5

White needs to keep the queens on in this sideline of the Berlin. 8 ♕xe7+?! ♗xe7 9 d4 ♗f5 10 c3 0-0-0 would already favour Black thanks to his bishops and lead in development.

8...♕d7 9 ♕e5+ ♕e6 10 ♕a5 ♗e7 11 ♖e1

Playing for the win and, of course, 11 ♕xc7? is impossible due to 11...♗d8.

11...♕d7 12 d3

12 ♕e5 would attempt to prevent Black castling, but he can at least do so by hand with 12...f6 13 ♕e2 ♔f7 14 d4 ♖e8.

12...0-0 13 ♗f4 b6 14 ♕d2 ♗b7 15 ♘e5 ♕d8

Luke must have been delighted with how the opening had panned out. Black has the two bishops, is about to open the long diagonal with ...c5 and can aim to manoeuvre his knight to d4.

16 ♘c3 ♘f5 17 ♘c4 c5 18 ♘e3 ♘h4!?

Or even to h4. Luke wants to attack, not allow 18...♘d4 19 ♗xc7, although even here Black appears for choice after 19...♕xc7 20 ♘ed5 ♕d6 21 ♘xe7+ ♔h8, since White's knights are in something of a pickle.

Luke McShane offered an early exchange of queens against Gediminas Sarakauskas in a Berlin, but despite that was already actually thinking about a direct assault on the white king.

19 ♗xc7 ♕d7!

This time the bishop can even be ignored. Black plans the brutal ...f5-f4, undermining the defence of g2.

20 ♗g3 f5 21 ♘e2?

The British Rapidplay Champion underestimates the danger. 21 f4 ♗f6 22 ♖e2 would have been quite grim for White (Black might even go 22...b5), but really had to be played, as 21 ♗xh4 ♗xh4 22 ♘c4 ♕c6 forces White to give up the exchange.

21...f4!

22 ♘xf4

This runs into a powerful follow-up sacrifice, but 22 ♗xf4? ♗xg2! would but be even worse.

22...♖xf4! 23 ♗xf4 ♗xg2!

Three exclams in a row and a winning position for Black. As 24 ♕d1 ♕h3 would be quite hopeless for White, Sarakauskas has to ditch his queen.

24 ♘xg2 ♘f3+ 25 ♔h1 ♘xd2 26 ♗xd2 ♗f6

In terms of pure material, White has enough, but his position is ragged and the extra queen far too strong.

27 ♗c3 ♗xc3 28 bxc3 ♖e8 29 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 30 ♘e3

Pawns would also have been quick to fall after 30 ♖e1 ♕a4.

30...♕e5 31 d4 cxd4 32 cxd4 ♕xd4 33 ♖d1 ♕a4 0-1

White has seen enough. 34 ♖a1 ♕a3 would force the win of the a-pawn.

Guildford I ran out 7½-½ winners, their second team only on the scoreboard thanks to Sophie Milliet who had much the better of a draw with her somewhat higher-rated compatriot Romain Edouard. Only Nigel Povah also came close to holding, but once again Jean-Pierre le Roux found a way to win.

Guildford's fellow six-time champions Wood Green are very much in the hunt for a top-four finish and began life in the Promotion Pool with a 5½-2½ victory over Blackthorne Russia, Justin Tan overcoming Danny Gormally on top board. Cheddleton meanwhile would really like to finish second and once again racked up a highly impressive score: 7½-½ against Barbican.

A Tight Scrap

It's quite possible that the two highest-rated teams in round 8, or round 4 if you prefer, of the Demotion Pool will go down, but neither can afford a major slip-up come the final weekend, so tight is the table. Grantham Sharks averaged 2319 to Alba's 2306 (for the sake of comparison, the lowest-rated side in the Championship Pool was White Rose at 2359), with the former scoring a vital two points. The in-form Peter Roberson outplayed Clement Sreeves on top board, James Holland, Louise Head and Adam Bremner following suit as Alba went down 5½-2½, Iain Gourlay their only winner.

J.Holland-R.McKay
Grantham Sharks vs Alba
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 g3 ♘c6 4 ♗g2 g6?!

Heading for an anti-Closed Sicilian set-up so is risky with d3 played instead of ♗g2 and is downright misguided here.

5 d4!

The problem. White is now a tempo up over the aforementioned King's Indian Attack line and Black faces definite issues with the d6-square.

5...cxd4 6 ♘xd4 a6 7 ♘c3

7 ♘xc6!? bxc6 8 ♕d4 is also quite attractive.

7...♗g7 8 ♗e3 ♘ge7 9 ♘xc6 bxc6?!

The ideal recapture, but 9...♘xc6 was the lesser evil, hoping to at least obtain some counterplay after 10 f4 d6 11 ♕d2 0-0 12 0-0-0 ♕a5.

10 ♕d6 ♗b7 11 ♕b4

Discombobulating. 11 0-0-0 ♘c8 12 ♕b4 followed by f2-f4 was equally effective.

11...♕c7 12 ♗b6

Probably not the most precise continuation as now 12...c5!? 13 ♗xc5 ♘c6 14 ♕b6 (14 ♕a3?! ♘d4 isn't so clear) 14...♕xb6 15 ♗xb6 ♖c8 would have enabled Black to free his position to a large extent, albeit at the cost of a pawn.

12...♕b8 13 ♗c5 a5 14 ♕a3 ♘c8 15 0-0-0 ♗a6 16 e5!

This bridgehead further serves to emphasise White's total dark-square grip. Note that the pawn was taboo: 16...♕xe5? 17 ♖xd7! ♔xd7 18 ♖d1+ wins, and if 18...♔c7 (or 18...♔e8 19 ♗xc6#) 19 f4 ♕f5 20 ♕xa5+ ♔b8 21 ♕b4+ ♔c7 22 ♗b6+! ♘xb6 23 ♕d6+ ♔b7 24 ♕xc6+, mating, or 16...♗xe5 17 f4 ♗g7 (17...♗c7 18 ♘e4 is no less horrific) 18 ♖xd7! ♔xd7 19 ♖d1+ ♔c7 20 ♗d6+, etc.

16...♘b6 17 f4 ♘c4 18 ♕b3 ♕c8 19 ♘e4 ♖b8 20 ♕d3! d5

McKay has done well to engineer this break for freedom, but unfortunately for him, Holland has everything worked out.

21 b3 dxe4 22 ♕xe4

Threatening mate and so ensuring that White regains the piece with significant interest.

22...♘xe5 23 fxe5 ♗b7 24 ♖hf1 ♗f8 25 ♕f4 ♕c7 26 ♖d6!

Black's position is a complete wreck and he must have been relieved when White now finished crisply.

26...h5 27 ♖xe6+! fxe6 28 ♕xf8+ ♖xf8 29 ♖xf8+ ♔d7 30 ♖f7+ 1-0

30...♔d8 31 ♖xc7 ♔xc7 32 ♗d6+ ♔c8 33 ♗xb8 ♔xb8 would be a trivial win, as shown by 34 h4 c5 35 ♗xb7 ♔xb7 36 ♔d2 ♔c6 37 c4 ♔d7 38 ♔e3 ♔e7 39 ♔f4 ♔f7 40 ♔g5 ♔g7 41 a4, seizing the opposition.

For all the talk that Pool B was much the stronger of the two initial groups, due to the non-seeding of Manx, the Demotion Pool does not read so badly for those sides who joined it via Pool A, at least not yet. North East England are not the strongest side on paper and may well go down, but just 50% in the final weekend could well keep them up. They did, however, struggle against Wood Green Monarchs in round 8, going down 5½-2½, with brutal defeats on the top two boards effectively deciding the match at an early stage.

R.Weaving-N.Ferrington
Wood Green Monarchs
vs North East England
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 ♕e2 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7 7 c3 0-0 8 0-0 d5 9 d3 ♗b7 10 ♖e1 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a3 h6 13 exd5 ♘a5!?

Two Knights Defence-like play. 13...♘xd5 14 ♘e4 ♘b8 looks like a logical regrouping and likely is (but not 14...f5? 15 ♗xh6! when as if from nowhere White crashes through, Black being cleaned up due to the fork on f6 or 15...fxe4 16 ♕xe4 ♘ce7 17 ♘g5), despite *Stockfish* clamouring for the daring 15 g4!?.

14 ♗c2 ♕xd5?

Now White is able to expand with tempo and take control. As such, either of the other recaptures should have been preferred.

15 b4! ♘c6 16 ♗b3 ♕d7 17 ♘e4 ♘xe4

White's pieces flow to good squares and Black is left with a Hobson's choice between improving White's structure and facing an invasion of c5 after 17...♗e7 18 ♗e3.

18 dxe4 ♗d6?

As remarkable as it may seem, this was already the decisive mistake. Once again, Black needed to involve his light-squared bishop while adding some ballast to the kingside, as with 18...♘d8.

19 ♘h4!

Weaving is quick to launch a textbook attack against the under-defended black monarch.

19...♗c8 20 ♕h5 ♘d8 21 ♘f5 ♘e6

21...♗f8? would, of course, allow 22 ♖d1 ♕c6 23 ♗d5 and there's also 22 ♗xh6!? gxh6 23 ♖e3.

22 ♗xh6!

Crashing through. Now 22...g6 23 ♕g4 ♕d8 24 ♖ad1 would leave White a pawn up and completely dominating proceedings. Ferrington prefers to allow Weaving to reveal his main idea.

22...gxh6 23 ♘xh6+ ♔f8 24 ♘f5 ♔g8 25 ♖e3

The rook lift is immediately decisive in view of 25...♘g7 26 ♖g3 ♗f8 27 ♗xf7+!.

25...♗f8 26 ♖h3 ♗g7

Sportingly allowing the pretty finish.

27 ♕h7+ ♔f8 28 ♕h8+! ♗xh8 29 ♖xh8# 1-0

R.Coathup-T.Sygnowski
North East England vs
Wood Green Monarchs

White had blundered a pawn straight out of the opening and now Black attacked in *AlphaZero* fashion.

21...h5! 22 f3

22 ♕xa7 h4 23 ♘h1 ♗e2 would not have been good news for White, of course, who would surely have been unable to save the game even after 22 h3 ♗xh3 23 gxh3 h4 24 ♕c3.

22...h4!?

This works out well, but objectively 22...♗xf3! 23 gxf3 h4 was even stronger, and if 24 ♘h1? ♘e2+ 25 ♗xe2 ♖xe2.

23 ♘h1?

Now the white king once again finds itself fatally constrained. 23 fxg4 hxg3 24 hxg3 was grim, yet had to be tried.

23...♗xf3! 24 gxf3

24 ♖e1 ♗xg2 25 ♗xg2 ♕g6 26 ♕d2 h3 also fails to alleviate matters.

24...♘e2+ 25 ♗xe2 ♖xe2 26 ♘f2 ♖xf2!

Finishing in style. Black goes a rook down, but his active queen, passed h-pawn and the open e-file are what count.

27 ♔xf2 ♕xh2+ 28 ♔f1 h3 0-1

One might have imagined that West is Best would struggle to stay up, but they scored a huge victory in round 8, stunning the higher-rated 3Cs 4½-3½, despite losing the top two boards to Stephen Gordon and Norwegian IM Johannes Haug. Points came on the lower boards from Jonathan Blackburn, Agoston Mihalik and John Redmond, with the exchange-up WGM Katarzyna Toma able to seal victory by allowing Adam Ashton to force perpetual check.

3Cs may have to strengthen for the final weekend and could also do with a little more fortune, Sarah Longson blundering away one of her two huge passed pawns on the cusp of the time control, which cost her an almost certain victory after a fine game. The day before she had, however, managed to win in style with a bold attack.

Despite suffering a surprise defeat against your Editor, Justin Tan has a fine 6/8 for Wood Green this season, including holding Matthew Sadler. He defeated Danny Gormally in round 8.

A.Munshi-S.Longson
Grantham Sharks vs 3Cs
Giuoco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♘f6 4 d3 ♗e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 ♖e1 d6 7 a4 ♔h8 8 a5 a6 9 h3 h6 10 ♘c3 ♘g8 11 ♘d5 f5 12 c3 ♗f6 13 ♕b3 fxe4 14 dxe4 ♗h4 15 ♘xh4 ♕xh4 16 ♗e3 ♘f6!?

16...♕d8 would not have fitted Black's aggressive intent.

17 ♘xc7 ♗xh3!

An excellent practical try, even if objectively White should be doing well. The talented Nottingham junior, however, failed to find the best way, which was 18 gxh3! ♕xh3 19 ♗f1 ♕h5 20 f3! when Black would have come up short, as after 20...♕xf3 21 ♗g2 ♕h5 22 ♗f2!, and if 22...♘g4 23 ♗g3.

18 ♘xa8? ♗xg2! 19 ♔xg2 ♘xe4

White is a rook and piece to the good, but already there's simply no defence.

20 ♗f7

20 ♖e2 defends f2, but fails to 20...♕g4+ 21 ♔f1 ♕f3 22 ♖c2 ♕xe3 23 ♗f7 ♕f3, while 20 ♗f1? ♖xf2+ 21 ♗xf2 ♕xf2+ would mate next move on g3.

20...♕g4+ 21 ♔f1 ♕f3 22 ♔g1 ♖xf7 23 ♕d1 ♕h3 24 f3

Trying to create a flight path for the king, in view of 24 ♖a4 ♖f6 25 ♖xe4 ♖g6+.

24...♖xf3

24...♕g3+ 25 ♔h1 (or 25 ♔f1 ♕h2 threatening 26...♘g3#) 25...♖f4! would have been even faster.

25 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 26 ♘b6 ♘g3 0-1

Oxford ensured that Pools A and B each won two matches in round 8, overcoming a side who may well strengthen for the final weekend, Celtic Tigers, 4½-3½. Chris Skulte's team were without Matthieu and Deimante Cornette and along with North East England were the only side to average under 2200. In what was a bloodthirsty match at the top end between two sides badly in need of the points, Oxford scored through Calin Gheorghiu and Joris Gerlagh, as well as thanks to Francesca Matta on board 8, Ritvars Reimanis and Hendrik Hoffman replying for the Tigers.

Eyes now turn to the crunch weekend of the 4NCL season, the final one again seeing the top two flights in action in Telford, May 4th-6th. Shropshire players may wish to drop by to catch the action, others will prefer to follow via 4ncl.co.uk.

We'll bring you in the June *CHESS* the full story of Guildford's title charge and who went down from Division One, as well as up from Division Two, where Barbican II currently lead from Cambridge University.

Sarah Longson is an important player for 3Cs and defeated rising star Aditya Munshi, and in some style. 3Cs, though, remain far from safe in what is a very open-looking relegation fight.

4NCL 2018/19 - Division 1 - Championship Pool

	Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1	Guildford	X			5-3	7-1	7-1		7½-½	**26½**	**8**
2	Cheddleton		X	3½-4½			7½-½	5-3	5½-2½	**21½**	**6**
3	Chess.com Manx Liberty		4½-3½	X		3½-4½		6-2	5-3	**19**	**6**
4	Wood Green	3-5			X	3½-4½	5½-2½	5½-2½		**17½**	**4**
5	White Rose	1-7		4½-3½	4½-3½	X	2-6			**12**	**4**
6	Barbican 4NCL	1-7	½-7½		2½-5½	6-2	X			**10**	**2**
7	Blackthorne Russia		3-5	2-6	2½-5½			X	4-4	**11½**	**1**
8	Guildford II	½-7½	2½-5½	3-5				4-4	X	**10**	**1**

4NCL 2018/19 - Division 1 - Demotion Pool

	Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1	Wood Green Monarchs	X		2-6		5½-2½		4½-3½	4½-3½	16½	6
2	Oxford		X		4-4	3½-4½	4½-3½	4½-3½		16½	5
3	3Cs	6-2		X			3½-4½	3½-4½	5½-2½	18½	4
4	Alba		4-4		X	4-4	4½-3½		2½-5½	15	4
5	North East England	2½-5½	4½-3½		4-4	X	4-4			15	4
6	West is Best		3½-4½	4½-3½	3½-4½	4-4	X			15½	3
7	Celtic Tigers	3½-4½	3½-4½	4½-3½				X	4-4	15½	3
8	Grantham Sharks	3½-4½		2½-5½	5½-2½			4-4	X	15½	3

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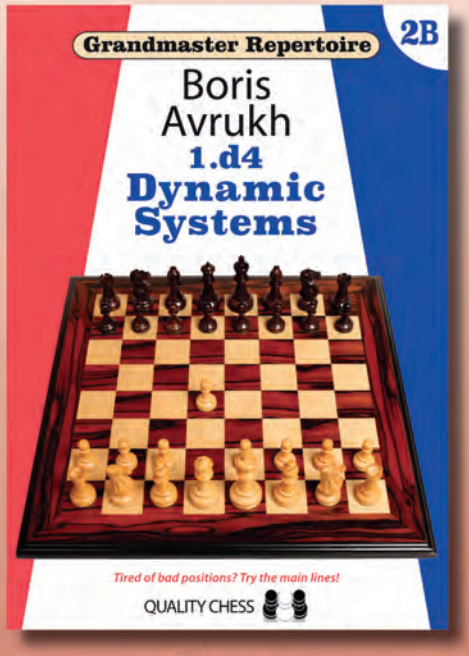

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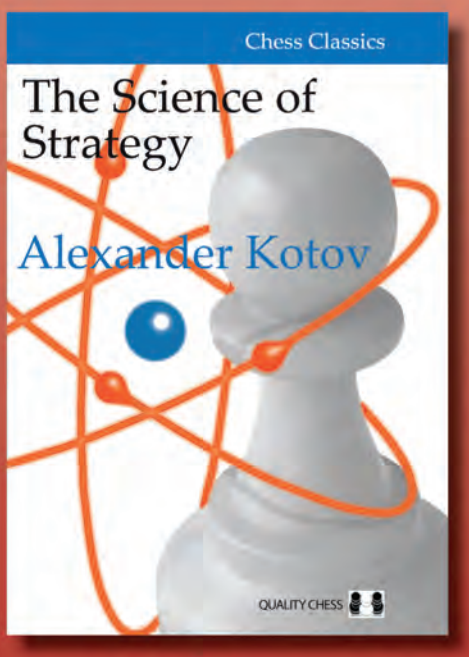

240 pages
Published on April 3rd

The Science of Strategy by Alexander Kotov

Chess is a strategically deep game and it is no surprise that players often struggle to find the right strategy over the board. Computers may be able to show a good move in a position, but they can't explain how it should fit into an overall plan.

Kotov's clear and methodical style makes this book an ideal guide to chess strategy. He describes the chess in words rather than relying overmuch on variations, and illustrates his ideas in insightfully annotated positional games, with the likes of Alekhine, Botvinnik and Karpov featuring heavily.

Alexander Kotov was the 1948 Soviet Champion (jointly with Bronstein), and a member of the USSR gold-medal-winning team at the 1952 and 1954 Olympiads. He is also renowned as a chess author, most famously for *Think Like a Grandmaster*.

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ENDGAME Masterclass

Gawain Jones ground out some victories en route to double silver in Astana, winning a number of instructive endgames, two of which he kindly shares with us

In Astana I played quite a few endgames. The couple of examples I would like to show are certainly not without mistakes, but are I think quite interesting.

G.Jones-E.Safarli
England vs Azerbaijan

29 ♖xa5

I'm now a clear pawn up, but my pieces don't coordinate well. In particular my king is trapped in the corner. Should Black just wait my plan was to bring my rook to d4, then go h2-h3 and ♗f1-c4.

I took quite a while to decide whether to throw in 29 ♖a8+ ♔h7 first. In the end I rejected it because of the line 30 ♖xa5 ♘g4 when I don't have the same idea as in the game.

29...♘g4

Targeting the weak point in my position, the f2-pawn.

30 ♖a4

And in return I exploit the rook's location to trade off a pair of pawns.

30...♖b2

30...f5? of course fails to 31 ♗c4+.

31 ♖xe4

The engine prefers keeping the f2-pawn rather than the one on b5, with 31 b6 ♖xb6 32 ♖xe4, but with the remaining pawns all on one side of the board I thought the drawing margin rather high.

31...♘xf2 32 ♖e5?!

We both miss a defensive idea here. I should have gone after the f7-pawn with 32 ♖e8+ ♔h7 33 ♖f8, but I'm still a long way from converting after, say, 33...♔g6 34 ♗c4 ♘h3+ 35 ♔f1 ♘g5.

32...♘g4?

The wrong way to kick my rook.

One point of my last can be seen after 32...g6? 33 b6!. The pawn can't be taken as the knight would be hanging and after 33...♘g4 34 ♖b5 Black won't be able to stop the pawn.

I think 32...f6! is very tough for a human to spot. Instead of defending his pawn or attacking one of mine, Black should try to force me to take. The point is that after 33 ♖xh5 ♘g4! I can no longer defend the e3-square, while my rook has to stay out of the game to defend the h2-pawn. After 34 e4 (if 34 ♖c5 ♘xh2!) 34...g6! 35 ♖h4 ♘e3 36 ♖f4 ♔g7 37 ♖f2 ♖b1 Black will take on f1 and pick up the b5-pawn when it should be a pretty easy draw.

33 ♖e8+!

The big difference.

33...♔h7 34 h3 ♘f2

Safarli criticised this after the game, but there's no good square for the knight. 34...♘f6 would be the most natural, but then Black can't defend his f7-pawn after 35 ♖e7, while the knight is too passive after 34...♘h6 35 ♗d3+ g6 36 e4.

35 ♖e5

Renewing the threats. In general I didn't want to advance the pawn unless I could guarantee it was queening, but with computer help 35 b6! looks strong: 35...♘d1 (35...♘xh3+!? 36 ♗xh3 ♖xb6 could be a decent practical try) 36 ♖b8 ♘xe3 37 ♗d3+ g6 38 b7. I got around this far in my analysis. It'll take me three moves to queen the pawn (defend b7 with my bishop, move the rook out of the way, and finally queen), and I was worried Black would drum up some counterplay in the meantime. However the engine assures me there's nothing to worry about: for example, 38...h4 39 g4 f5 40 g5 ♘d1 41 ♗f1 ♘f2 42 ♖d8 ♘xh3+ 43 ♗xh3 ♖xb7 44 ♖d4 and wins.

35...♘d1

35...g6 would drop the knight to 36 b6!, although he could have made me work for the full point after 36...♘xh3+ 37 ♗xh3 ♖xb6 when it won't be easy to convert the extra piece. However, 35...f6 no longer makes any sense as the knight can't come back to g4 anyway.

36 ♖xh5+ ♔g6 37 ♖e5

I thought my position should now be closer to a win than a draw, but I knew it wasn't trivial. My pawns, in particular the one on e3, are quite vulnerable and I still have the problem that my king is a long way from the action.

37...♔f6 38 ♖e4 g5 39 h4

If in doubt creating a passed pawn can't be a bad decision.

39...♘c3 40 ♖c4 ♘d1 41 ♖c6+!

I was pleased to come up with this plan. The black king doesn't have a good square.

41...♔g7

I thought the most tenacious defence was 41...♔e7, but I then can exploit another pin with 42 ♖c1! ♘f2 (or 42...♘xe3 43 ♖e1) 43 ♖c4!, keeping the knight out of the game.

If instead the king goes to the fifth rank with 41...♔f5, I again have the idea of 42 b6 ♘xe3 43 ♖c5+ followed by blocking with ♖b5.

42 h5!

Now I can combine pushing my pawns with mating ideas.

42...f6

The main line of my analysis went 42...♘xe3 43 h6+ ♔h8 44 ♗d3 f5 45 ♖e6 ♖g2+ 46 ♔h1 ♖xg3. Here I had to make sure Black had no threat and I was satisfied I could play 47 b6 when Black can't stop the pawn.

43 ♗d3 g4 44 h6+

I thought exchanging pawns should leave me in a technically winning ending. The engine points out 44 b6! was more accurate, but here I started seeing some ghosts with his rook, knight and g4-pawn against my lone king. However, the engine points out that I have nothing to fear after 44...♘xe3 45 ♗a6 when my b-pawn is just too quick.

44...♔xh6 45 ♖xf6+ ♔g5

45...♔g7 was a better try: 46 ♖g6+ ♔f7 47 ♖xg4 ♘xe3 and with the two extra pawns White is now winning, but I would still need to show accuracy.

46 ♖g6+ ♔h5 47 ♖e6

Towards the end of the game I was choosing the safer moves. 47 ♖c6! is pointed out by the engine. After 47...♘xe3 48 b6 I'll again be able to bring my rook around to b5 with gain of tempo and push through the b-pawn.

47...♘f2 48 ♖e5+

It was better to set up on the sixth rank with 48 ♗g6+ ♔g5 49 b6.

48...♔h6 49 ♗f5

Now that everything is defended I just wanted to bring my king over to the queenside to shepherd the b-pawn through.

49...♘h3+

Pushing my king where it wants to go, but Black is out of good options. The engine wants to defend with 49...♔g7, but then I was intending 50 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 51 ♖g5+ ♔f6 52 ♖xg4 when the e- and g-pawns are enough to win.

Gawain Jones deep in thought during the World Team Championship in Astana. He had to make a number of tricky decisions deep in the fifth hour of play, but largely got them right.

50 ♔f1 ♔h5 51 ♖c5 ♘g5 52 ♗c2 ♔h6 53 ♔e1 ♘f3+ 54 ♔d1 ♔g7 55 ♔c1

My king is finally involved!

55...♖b4 56 ♗d3 ♔f6 57 ♔c2 ♘e5 58 ♔c3 ♖a4 59 ♗c2 ♖a3+ 60 ♔d4 ♘f3+ 61 ♔d5 ♖xe3 62 b6 ♖e5+ 63 ♔c4 ♖e2 64 ♔b4 ♘d4 65 b7 ♘xc2+ 66 ♔c3 1-0

L.Johansson-G.Jones
Sweden vs England

White's opening went completely wrong and so he's put his faith into the drawish tendencies of the opposite-coloured bishops.

24 ♗b3 ♗c5 25 ♖d1 ♗d4 26 ♔f1 ♔g7 27 ♔e2 b5 28 ♖d2 ♖c7

I need to create another weakness in White's position before trading rooks.

29 ♖c2 ♗c3 30 ♔d3 b4 31 ♗d5 ♔h6 32 f3

I was very happy that he started touching the kingside pawns as now it'll be easier to create a passed pawn.

32...♔g5 33 g3 f6

So I can move my rook. Despite the symmetrical structure on the kingside I think White is in a lot of trouble. With the king's support I'll be able to force some weaknesses or a passed pawn.

34 ♔e2

Around here he should probably play 34 a3 a5 35 axb4 axb4 36 ♖a2. On the one hand, he's given me a passed pawn, but at least his rook has a little more activity.

34...♖c5 35 ♔f1 f5 36 ♔g2 f4!

I need to create an imbalance on the kingside.

37 ♖c1

In principle White would like to keep it closed with 37 g4, but then my king can enter: 37...♔h4. Alternatively, 37 h4+ ♔h5 (37...♔f6 38 g4 would be White's dream scenario as then it would be very difficult to break in) 38 gxf4 exf4 39 ♔h3 ♗d4 when White should keep the rooks on with 40 ♖d2, albeit with a very unpleasant task to hold the draw due to the vulnerable pawns on h4 and f3, although he can hope to get counterplay with his e-pawn. Note too that here 40 ♖xc5? leaves White in a lost ending. The game might go: 40...♗xc5 41 ♗e6 ♗d6

42 ♗g4+ ♔h6 43 ♗d7 a5 44 ♔g4 ♗b8! (getting the bishop out of the way for the king's march to the queenside) 45 ♗c6 ♗c7 46 ♗d7 ♔g7 47 h5 gxh5+ 48 ♔xh5 ♔f6 49 ♔h6 (the time it takes White to win the h7-pawn allows Black's king to enter on the dark squares) 49...♔e5 50 ♔xh7 ♔d4 51 ♔g6 ♔e3 52 ♔f5 ♔xf3 53 e5 ♔e3 and wins.

37...♖c7?!

Around the time control I temporise before getting additional time to calculate the opposite-coloured bishop ending. I should have taken the plunge immediately with 37...fxg3! 38 hxg3 ♗d4. Allowing my rook to the second rank isn't appealing, but the bishop endgame is already lost, as we'll see later on.

38 ♗b3 ♖d7 39 ♖d1 ♗d4?!

Still another two moves to go to reach move 40 and I wasn't ready to make the decision.

White has a few options as to what structure he'd like on the kingside after 39...♖xd1, but they all seem to be lost: 40 ♗xd1 (after 40 h4+ ♔f6 41 ♗xd1 fxg3 42 ♔xg3 ♗e1+ 43 ♔h3 h5 44 ♗a4 g5 I've successfully created a passed pawn on the kingside) 40...fxg3 41 ♔xg3 (41 hxg3 h5 is very similar to the game; White can try 42 ♔h3 here, but it won't make a difference in the long run). I wasn't sure how to assess this one while short of time, but Black is winning; there are just too many weak squares in White's position: for example, 41...♗e1+ 42 ♔g2 ♔f4 (White can defend either the e3- or g3-square, but not both and so my king will enter) 43 ♗b3 a5 44 ♗a4 (44 ♔f1 allows a neat win with 44...♗g3!) 44...♔e3 45 ♗b3 ♗h4 46 ♗a4 ♗g5 47 ♗b3 ♗f4 and I'm ready to bring my king to the queenside.

40 ♖c1

In return 40 h4+! is a very hard move to make on move 40, but White has to try closing the kingside: 40...♔h5 (40...♔f6 should be played, but now White has 41 g4! and he has his dream of closing up the kingside) 41 gxf4 exf4 42 e5 and White is starting to get some counterplay, as with 42...♖d8 43 e6 ♗f6 44 ♖c1, which should be a draw.

40...♗e3 41 ♖d1

41...♖d4?

This gives White a saving resource. Again, I should have exchanged rooks: 41...♖xd1! 42 ♗xd1 (or 42 h4+ ♔h5 43 ♗xd1 fxg3 44 ♔xg3 ♗f4+ 45 ♔h3 g5 46 hxg5 ♔xg5 and I'll be able to create two passed pawns) 42...fxg3 43 ♔xg3 (43 hxg3 is very similar to the game). This recapture was the reason I delayed the exchange of rooks as I wasn't absolutely sure it was winning, but we've already seen a sample line with this structure and this is no different.

42 ♔f1?

During the game I thought 42 g4 was the best defence. Now the bishop ending is just a draw and so I should start with 42...♗d2. The black king will be able to enter on h4 again, but it's not clear if it's winning. Black's plan is to play ...h5 and force White either to create more weaknesses with h3 or trade with gxh5 gxh5, when I can swing my rook round to the open g-file.

42 ♖xd4! looks a bad move on principle, giving me another passed pawn, but White can now get counterplay with his e-pawn, while the d-pawn might actually get in the way and block my king's advance into White's position: 42...exd4 (42...♗xd4 43 g4 again should be a draw) 43 e5 d3 44 g4 ♗d4 45 e6 ♗c5 46 ♗c4 d2 47 ♗b3 ♔f6 48 ♔f1 and I don't really see how Black makes progress here without trading d2 for e6, in which case it should be a draw.

42...♖xd1+!

Finally taking my chance.

43 ♗xd1 fxg3 44 hxg3 h5

The engines don't seem at all sure, but I think this is just winning. White can't stop Black from creating a passed pawn on the kingside and then I can use that to distract White's king, so I'll have free rein on the queenside.

45 ♗a4 ♔h6 46 ♔e2 ♗c1 47 ♔d1 ♗b2 48 f4

If White sits Black should be winning, but I do need to be accurate to avoid one rather large pitfall after 48 ♔e2 g5 49 ♔f1:

a) Black should be patient, as 49...h4? looks very natural, but allows White a trick: 50 ♔g2 ♗c3 51 ♔h3 ♗e1 52 gxh4 gxh4 53 f4! (a very strong pawn sacrifice; the reason will become apparent in a few moves time) 53...exf4 54 ♔g4 ♗g3 55 e5 ♔g6 56 ♗b3 a5 57 ♗c2+ ♔f7 58 ♗b3+ ♔e7 59 ♗c4 a4 60 ♗d5 ♔d7 61 ♗f7 when Black has got as far as he can without the g3-bishop. He can play 61...f3 (61...♔c7 62 ♗d5 ♔b6 63 e6 ♔c7 64 e7 ♔d7 65 ♗c6+ doesn't get Black anywhere) 62 ♔xf3 ♗xe5 63 ♔g4 ♗g3 64 ♗c4 when it looks like Black has done all the hard work and can now bring the king to the queenside to support the b-pawn's advance. White will have to sacrifice his bishop and Black will be left a bishop and pawn up. The only problem is that it's the wrong rook's pawn and so just a draw.

b) 49...a5! 50 ♔g2 ♗d4 51 ♗e8 ♔g7 (the h-pawn is never really hanging as long as I'm controlling the f7-square) 52 ♗a4 (52 ♗xh5 a4 53 ♗e8 b3 54 axb3 a3 wins) 52...♔f6 53 ♗b5 ♔e7 54 ♗a4 ♔d6 55 ♗e8 (now the pawn really is attacked) 55...h4 (and not 55...♔c5? 56 ♗xh5 a4 57 ♗f7) 56 ♔h3 ♗f2 57 gxh4 gxh4 58 ♔g4 (58 f4 no longer works here as Black's king is far more active: 58...exf4 59 ♔g4 ♔e5 60 ♗c6 ♗g3 and White is in zugzwang) 58...♗g3 (Black can simply bring the king around to b2) 59 ♗a4 ♔c5 60 ♗e8 ♔d4 61 ♗d7 ♔c3 62 f4!? ♗xf4 63 ♔xh4 ♔b2 and with Black still having an e-pawn, the win is trivial.

48...h4!

I decided I'd prefer to have an f-pawn.

48...exf4 49 gxf4 h4 was the other option, but I was scared White might somehow manage to leave me with just the h-pawn and wrong-coloured bishop, as we saw in the above note.

49 gxh4 exf4 50 ♔e2 ♔h5 51 ♗e8

51 ♔f3 doesn't help White either: 51...♔xh4 52 ♔xf4 g5+ 53 ♔f3 g4+ 54 ♔g2 ♔g5 55 ♗d7 ♔f4 56 ♗f5 a5 57 ♗d7 ♗e5 58 ♗c6 (or 58 ♔f1 ♔f3) 58...♔e3 59 ♗d7 g3 60 ♗c6 ♔d3 61 ♔f3 ♔c3 62 ♔g2 ♔b2 63 ♗d5 a4, etc.

51...♔xh4 52 ♗xg6 ♔g3 53 ♗h5 a5 54 ♔d3

White can't stop both the f- and a-pawns, as shown too by 54 ♗f3 a4 55 ♗h5 b3 56 ♗f7 (56 axb3 a3) 56...♔g2! 57 axb3 f3+ 58 ♔e3 f2 59 ♗c4 a3 and wins.

54...f3 55 ♔c4 ♔f4

I first made absolutely sure that this wasn't going to an embarrassing Giri-Shankland style ending!

56 ♔b5 f2 57 ♗e2 ♔xe4 58 ♔xa5 ♔e3 59 ♗a6 ♗a3 0-1

Studies
with Stephenson

The British Chess Solving Championship, organised by the British Chess Problem Society, has been held every year since 1979/80. The BCPS has been grateful for generous sponsorship for most of those years, most recently from Winton Capital Management.

Graham Lee won the first championship and for many years thereafter there was just a handful of champions. In descending order of number of championships won they are: Jonathan Mestel (18), John Nunn (9), David Friedgood (5), Michael McDowell (3), Colin McNab (2), Graham Lee (1) and Ian Watson (1). The 2018-2019 event was the fortieth of the sequence and it generated a new champion – David Hodge.

David won the title with a score of 52.5/65. Behind him came Mestel (51.5), Nunn (51), McDowell (49) and Dafydd Johnston (40). The event was part of the World Solving Cup, a *grand prix* run by the World Federation for Chess Composition. This attracted a number of foreign solvers seeking points. They solved the same set of problems in an Open section with a separate prize fund. Of these Eddy van Beers (BEL), was first with 60, Nikos Mendrinos (GRE) second with 57, Martynas Limontas (LTU) third with 56 and Dolf Wissmann (NED) fourth with 54.5.

The event is going from strength to strength and thanks are due to Nigel Dennis, the overall controller, now in his third year.

Round 3 was the study round, and this was the first study set for solution.

A.Maksimovskikh
1st Prize, *Sovyetskaya Zaural*, 1977

White to play and win

1 ♕h7+ ♔g5

Black could try 1...♔g3, but he loses his queen quickly after 2 ♗c7 ♘d4+ 3 ♔d2 ♘f3+ 4 ♔e3.

2 ♗d2+ ♔xf6

If 2...♔f5 White wins with 3 ♕h3+ ♔xf6 4 ♗c3 ♘d4+ 5 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 6 ♕h8+. The black queen can take her pinner, but then suffer the white skewer, a theme that pervades this study.

3 ♗c3 ♗f3+ 4 ♔d3

With this move the white king starts on a very careful journey, making sure that the black queen can't take the pinning bishop without suffering the skewer.

4...♗e4+ 5 ♔c4 ♗d5+

Black has a couple of other checks, but in each case the white king can reach safety, after which the black queen is lost: 5...♘xa3+ 6 ♔b4 ♘c2+ 7 ♔b3, or 5...♘e3+ 6 ♔b3 ♗d5+ 7 ♔b4 ♘c2+ 8 ♔b5 ♘xa3+ 9 ♔b6 ♘c4+ 10 ♔c5.

6 ♔b5 ♗c6+

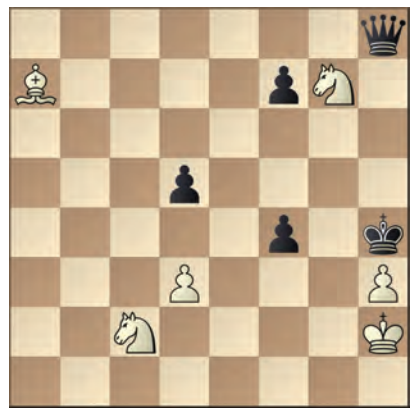
6...♘xa3+ 7 ♔b6 ♘c4+ 8 ♔c5 wins, as in the previous note.

7 ♔a6 ♗b5+ 8 ♔b7 ♗c6+ 9 ♔c8

Black is now bereft of useful checks and so must lose his queen.

For the first time there was a minor competition for solvers rated under 2000. Competitors solved alongside the Championship section, but had a simpler set of problems to tackle. Clive Frostick emerged the winner on 57/65, with Giles Body second on 54 and Chris Shephard third on 48.5. There were also junior prizes for Joseph Varley and Jonathan McKay. This was one of the studies they had to solve, a classic by Troitzky, unsound on first publication, but corrected by an unknown (to me) hand at a later date. Do have a go at solving it!

Aleksey Troitzky
Shakhmatny Zhurnal, 1896
(version)



White to play and win

To enter email matt@chess.co.uk or send your name and address, with the main variations, to Chess & Bridge Ltd., 44 Baker Street, London, W1U 7RT, postmarked no later than 1st July. A book of a value up to £30 for the first correct entry drawn.

David Hodge receives the British Chess Solving Championship trophy from Sean Bernard of Winton Capital Management. Hodge caused a shock as he finished ahead of Nunn and Mestel.

Fifty Years Ago

Inspired by Ben Graff looking back at the second Petrosian-Spassky world championship match, John Saunders cast his mind back to 1969, wondering who the world's strongest tournament player was and if a new era was about to begin

"If you remember the '60s, you really weren't there" is an oft-quoted witticism, but it doesn't seem to apply to me. Quite the opposite: perspicacious readers might be tempted to remark that chess in the sixties is *all* I seem to remember given my frequent writings about them (viz. articles in at least four issues of this magazine between November 2011 and February 2012). My latest excuse for revisiting that period is that half a century has elapsed since that time, which roughly coincided with my own first chessboard fumblings. Hopefully, like the panellists of BBC Radio Four's *Just a Minute* show, I shall be able to do so without hesitation, repetition or deviation. Fingers on buzzers...

As the year 1969 opened, Tigran Petrosian was world champion with Boris Spassky to be his official challenger for a second time, but there were perhaps three other players with an unofficial claim to supremacy, at least in terms of being the best tournament player. Leonard Barden wrote a piece about this in his *Guardian* column of January 4th 1969. In it, Barden cited Petrosian's unimpressive form in tournaments, while Spassky had understandably put most of his energy into winning Candidates' matches. Fischer had won some tournaments by large margins in 1967/68, but Barden rightly pointed out these had been events below the highest class. Barden felt Larsen had subsided somewhat since his *annus mirabilis* of 1967.

It was a fifth player that Barden had in mind as the number one tournament player: "On the evidence of the play in 1968, the king of the tournaments is Victor Korchnoi of Russia. In Beverwijk at the start of the year he finished easing up three points ahead of a field of grandmasters; in Majorca in December his score of 14 out of 17 was ahead of Larsen, and Spassky (who both lost their individual games to Korchnoi) 13, Petrosian 11½, Gligoric 10½, and five other grandmasters. Korchnoi is one of the few top players who genuinely prefers defence to attack. His defence is not passive, but the flexible psychological kind which lures the opponent to over-extend himself and to be unprepared for Korchnoi's fast counters."

In those days FIDE's official rating list was still a year or two into the future, though unofficial lists based on the Elo system were often published in magazines. In late 1968 Professor Arpad Elo produced an unofficial world rating list based on at least 30 games played at major events from the period January 1966 to May 1969, with 350+ names appearing on it. It showed Fischer on 2720, Spassky 2690, Korchnoi 2680, Botvinnik 2660, Petrosian 2650, Larsen 2630, Geller and Portisch 2620, Polugaevsky, Smyslov, Stein and Tal 2610, Kholmov and Olafsson 2600.

British names appearing were Penrose 2500, Keene 2470, Hindle 2430, Basman 2410, Lee 2380, Clarke, Hartston and Kottnauer 2370, Golombek 2350, Wright 2340, Persitz (officially still English-registered) 2330, Wade (then officially a New Zealander, but long domiciled in the UK) 2320, Whiteley 2310, John Littlewood 2300, with A.M. Davie 2280 the only Scot listed.

The 1968/69 Hastings tournament was won by Smyslov with 8½/11, while four of the five Brits (Wright, Clarke, Persitz and Kottnauer) made minus scores, though last place went to the Australian player Max Fuller who was then based in the UK. Ray Keene bucked the trend by scoring 7½/11. The strong Czechoslovak player Jan Smejkal produced plenty of decisive games and must have been particularly popular that year after the fiasco of 1967/68, when four invited GMs agreed short draws against each other and were greeted with ironic applause by the tournament director as they vacated their boards in the last round.

Though the 1968/69 Hastings tournament marked an upswing for Ray Keene and the tournament itself, it had an off-putting effect on the competitors who didn't do so well. Persitz and Kottnauer never played big-time chess again. For the Israeli player it was more a case of leaving the country and moving on to a different career in which chess did not figure, but for the 59-year-old Cenek Kottnauer it was more about age as he saw the young English players overtake him in strength. He was still to serve his adopted country well thereafter, however, as a coach to up and coming British players including Julian Hodgson, Stuart Conquest, Willie Watson and Dharshan Kumaran.

I'm inclined to think of 1969 as the end of an era rather than the beginning of a new one. It marked Jonathan Penrose's tenth and last British Championship victory, though he carried on competing for a few more years. I covered that more fully in my 2011/12 articles. Also, it preceded the Fischer boom, which only took off in 1970 when the American was persuaded to play in the Soviet Union versus the World match. In 1969 Fischer only emerged for one game in a local league match in New York, in which he defeated Anthony Saidy.

Another indicator that 1969 was more about the old than the new was the result of the Hoogovens Beverwijk tournament, in which Botvinnik and Geller tied for first half a point ahead of Keres and Portisch. The tournament featured 16 players, and lasted the entirety of January, but the Great Patriarch, who turned 59 later in the year, still had the stamina for it, going through unbeaten, taking quick draws against his main rivals, but subjecting the rest of the field to a sterner examination.

Victor Korchnoi's fighting play, defence and tournament success greatly impressed Leonard Barden at the start of 1969.

Long all-play-alls were still the norm back in 1969. A field of 16 was the standard, but some tournaments were bigger still. Often places were set aside for local experts who fell a long way short of master strength: no bad thing since it meant that the pros had a few easy days on which they would put the patzers to the sword. Not so, the USSR Championship, of course, which featured formidable players all the way down.

The September/October 1969 USSR Championship consisted of 23 GMs or soon-to-be GMs. At the top were Polugaevsky and Petrosian with 14/22, half a point ahead of Geller, Smyslov and Taimanov. Somewhere in mid-table was Tal. At the foot of the table were Tukmakov (2490 on Prof. Elo's unofficial list, who had finished tied third with Keene at Hastings); Furman (Karpov's second, unofficially rated 2590); and Kupreichik, himself soon to be a formidable GM.

Comparing this to other major tournaments of the year, the only one which comes close was Palma de Mallorca in November/December, in which Larsen came first with 12/15 just ahead of Petrosian, who was himself a point clear of Korchnoi and Hort, and a point and half ahead of the man who had just supplanted him as world champion, Boris Spassky. These two results give the lie to the notion that Tigran Petrosian was below par as a tournament performer. Perhaps the loss of his match-play title gave him the motivation he needed to reignite his chess. Korchnoi may have started the year as the world's best tournament player, but by the end of it one would be inclined to cede that title to the great Armenian.

With hindsight the most significant tournament of 1969 was the World Junior Championship in Stockholm in August. The top final section was won with a score of 10/11, three points clear of the field, by the 18-year-old Anatoly Karpov. In his *Guardian* column Leonard Barden hailed him as "the New Spassky", recalling the current world champion's success as world junior winner in 1955 – until Karpov he was the only Soviet player to achieve this – and predicting that "If Karpov keeps to Spassky's schedule, he will be world champion in 1983." Karpov, as we now know, did rather better than that, with 1983 turning out to be closer to the end, rather than the beginning, of his reign as undisputed world champion. But Leonard had clearly seen the future. Perhaps 1969 was the start of an era after all.

Now for something completely different (a catchphrase which became popular around 1969). After all the high-minded stuff about the great and good of the era, let's see a British amateur dispatching a super-GM. In a simul, of course. I've never heard of the winner of the following game, but discovered from a family history database that he was called Eric Vivien Wileman, was born in 1941 in Birkenhead, and, sadly, died in the same part of the world in 1989. He was graded around the 170 mark so he was a decent player, and he shows it in this game with a shrewd choice of opening to discomfit the super-GM. Wileman was the only winner amongst the 24 who took on Gligoric in this January 1969 event at Chester YMCA.

Svetozar Gligoric analysing with Boris Spassky at Hastings 1965/66, with a young Ray Keene in the background. Gligoric then came second to Smyslov in 1968/69 ahead of visiting Chester.

S.Gligoric-E.Wileman
Chester (simul) 1969
Sicilian Nimzowitsch

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6

This line, named after Nimzowitsch, is not a bad choice for a simul as it leads to imbalance and chances for counterplay, as well as being something the grandmaster wouldn't see too often in playing with his peers.

3 e5 ♘d5 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♘xd5 exd5 6 d4 ♘c6 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 ♕xd5 ♕b6 9 ♗c4 ♗xf2+ 10 ♔e2 0-0 11 ♖d1

Much more usual is something like 11 ♖f1 ♗c5 12 ♘g5 ♘d4+ 13 ♔d1 ♘e6 14 ♘e4 with a slight edge for White, but maybe Gligoric wanted to avoid preparation. Either that or he remembered getting into a big mess when Bent Larsen played this line against him at Zurich 1959, though he came through that one to win.

11...d6 12 exd6 ♗e6 13 ♕e4 ♖ae8 14 ♔f1 ♗xc4+ 15 ♕xc4 ♘e5 16 ♘xe5?

16 ♕b3, threatening to swap off queens, must be right here. White should emerge with an advantage if he's careful.

16...♖xe5 17 ♕f4

17 ♗f4 is natural and better.

17...♗g1

18 d7??

That's a shocker, but it's quite hard to identify the only reasonable move in the position which is 18 g3!, giving the vulnerable white king a hole to hide in.

18...♖e6 19 ♕h4

Maybe White planned 19 ♕f3 and only now noticed that, instead of 19...♖f6? 20 ♗f4, Black has the immediately decisive 19...♗xh2.

19...♖f6+ 20 ♗f4 ♗e3 21 g3 ♖d8 22 ♖d3 ♗xf4 23 gxf4 ♕c7 24 ♖d4 ♖xd7 25 ♖xd7?

Objectively Black has messed up the win slightly, and 25 ♖ad1 would keep White in the game, but in the context of a simul and his king as exposed as it is, finding the right moves is never going to be easy.

25...♕xd7 26 ♖e1 h6 27 ♖e4 ♕d1+ 28 ♕e1 ♕f3+ 0-1

Find the Winning Moves

24 puzzles to test your tactical ability, with, as ever, the positions grouped in rough order of difficulty. The games come from various recent events, not least the last two 4NCL weekends. Don't forget that whilst sometimes the key move will force mate or the win of material, other times it will just win a pawn.

Solutions on page 54.

Warm-up Puzzles

(1) F.Mcleod-G.Leon Cazares
4NCL, Telford 2019
Black to Play

(2) P.Maghsoodloo-K.Kulaots
Moscow 2019
Black to Play

(3) J.Rogers-A.Isaakidis
4NCL, Telford 2019
White to Play

(4) R.Mitra-B.Chan
BUCA Championship, Telford 2019
Black to Play

(5) B.Hymer-J.Carpenter
4NCL, Doncaster 2019
Black to Play

(6) S.Edwards-R.Taylor
Coventry 2019
Black to Play

Intermediate Puzzles for the Club Player - Solutions on page 54

(7) A.Zatonskih-M.Sebag
Saint Louis 2019
White to Play

(8) T.Fodor-A.Longson
4NCL, Telford 2019
White to Play

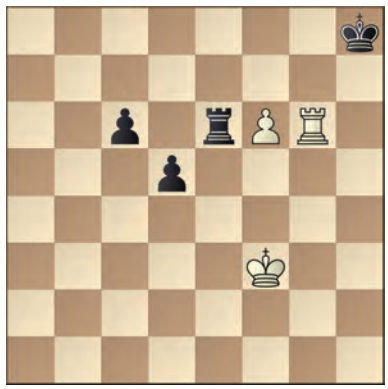
(9) D.Horton-N.Bond
Cheltenham (rapid) 2019
White to Play

(10) J.Van der Wiel-M.Warmerdam
Amsterdam (blitz) 2019
Black to Play

(11) M.Handley-R.Cherupalli
Bristol 2019
White to Play

(12) M.Attree-M.Britnell
Lewes 2019
White to Play

(13) C.Timmins-M.Handley
Bristol 2019
White to Play

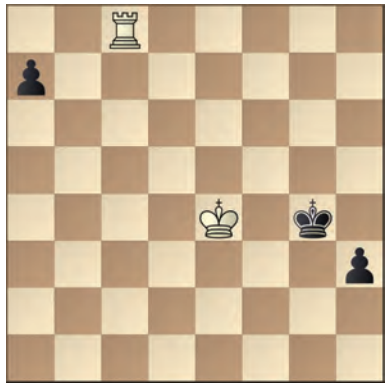


(14) R.McNally-M.Donnelly
Leamington League 2019
Black to Play

(15) B.Gelfand-P.Harikrishna
Prague 2019
White to Play

Harder Puzzles for the Club Player – Solutions on page 54

(16) D.Cullum-P.Mason
Leeds 2019
Black to Play



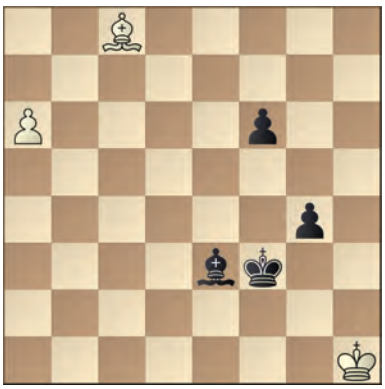
(17) C.Sreeves-J.Adair
4NCL, Telford 2019
Black to Play and Draw

(18) P.Guichard-D.Howell
4NCL, Telford 2019
Black to Play

(19) O.Kobo-V.Mikhalevski
Israeli League 2019
White to Play

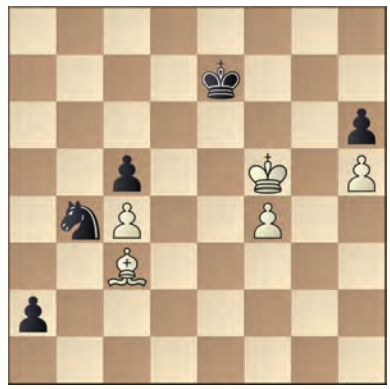
(20) N.Herega-B.Bajec
Nova Gorica 2019
White to Play

(21) P.Michalik-J.Stocek
Prague 2019
White to Play and Draw



(22) A.Stewart-M.Wadsworth
4NCL, Telford 2019
White to Play and Draw

(23) A.Hunt-N.Povah
4NCL, Telford 2019
White to Play



(24) E.Kardashevskiy-D.Divya
Moscow 2019
Black to Play

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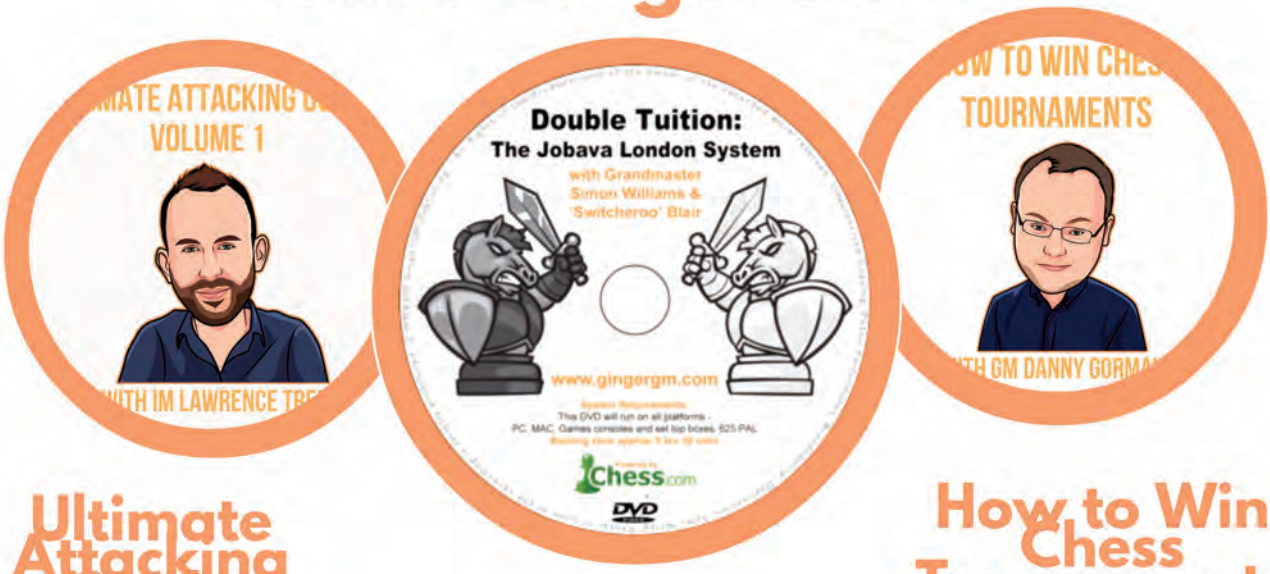

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How Good is Your Chess?

by Grandmaster Daniel King

It's been a while since I featured Adhiban 'The Beast' Baskaran in this column, but his excellent showing in the World Team Championship is a good reason to feature another of his games.

In the absence of the top three Indian players, Anand, Harikrishna and Vidit, Adhiban played on the first board and seized his chance, winning the individual gold medal with a score of 6/9. This result propels his rating over 2700, the fifth Indian ever to achieve that mark.

Adhiban plays fearlessly, optimistically, and confidently, never tempering his enterprising style, no matter who is sitting opposite. That means he is unafraid to attack (as we will see in our test game), and he possesses extraordinary resilience when under pressure.

B.Amin-B.Adhiban
World Team Ch., Astana 2019

Bassem Amin – Egypt's number 1 player, and himself over 2700 – has sacrificed the exchange and in return has a huge centre and the bishop-pair. Yet Adhiban did not crumble and with his last move, 20...f6, began a counterattack. With skill he fought back and turned the position around to win.

Against Swiercz, after getting the opening wrong, he found himself in this position.

Two pawns for a piece down and with a passive rook, but with great determination, he succeeded in holding on to draw in 88 moves.

His victory against the World Junior Champion, Parham Maghsoodloo, featured an original strategy.

Normally one would expect White to exert pressure on the e-file by doubling rooks, or perhaps manoeuvre the bishop to f3. Karpov was often successful with a positional squeeze in this kind of position. But the Beast goes his own way. No more playing against the isolated queen's pawn. Spying the king on a slightly exposed square, and Black's bishop and knight floating in the middle of the board without pawn anchors, he decided to open up the middle: 18 c4!? dxc4 19 ♖ac1, and the shock of the change in position caused his opponent to collapse. Adhiban won with a mating attack.

Adhiban has a favourite motivational quotation, and he practises what he preaches. From the Hindu mystic, Swami Vivekananda: "All power is within you. You can do anything and everything. Believe in that, do not believe that you are weak. Stand up and express the divinity within you!"

Begin after the first diagram. Whenever Black has moved, stop and try to guess White's reply which will be on the next line. Try to analyse as much as you would in a game – it could earn you bonus points. The article will test your standard of play or, if you prefer, just enjoy a fine game.

A.Baskaran-N.Grandelius
World Team Ch., Astana 2019
Giuoco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♘f6 4 d3 ♗c5 5 0-0 d6 6 c3 h6 7 ♖e1 0-0 8 ♘bd2 a5 9 ♘f1 ♗e6

10 ♗b5

Three points. This is the most challenging move. If Black had been allowed to exchange bishops then it would have eased the congestion in his position. For professional players, one of the attractions of the Giuoco Piano is that it is less forcing, so players have to feel their way through positions, instead of being able to reel off long lines of preparation. Many lines of the Ruy Lopez, for example, are more forcing and in our digital age have been analysed right down to the inevitably drawn endgame.

10 ♗xe6 (*one point*) 10...fxe6 11 d4 is an obvious way to play and looks good, but there are hidden dangers for White: 11...exd4 12 cxd4 ♗b6 13 ♘g3 ♘g4 – incredibly direct – 14 h3 ♘xf2 15 ♔xf2 ♕h4 16 ♗e3 d5, and it is hard to break free from the pins successfully. Not a forced line, but plausible. Hou Yifan-Naiditsch, Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden 2018, continued instead 11 ♗e3 ♗xe3 12

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♘xe3 d5, which is more prudent, but hard for White to prove any advantage.

10 ♘g3 (*one point*) continues the normal knight's journey, but after 10...♗xc4 11 dxc4 ♕d7 Black is ultra-solid.

10 ♗b3 does not present any difficulties for Black: 10...♗xb3 11 ♕xb3 ♕d7 is very comfortable. Moves such as 10 ♗b3, which aren't necessarily bad, but don't really achieve anything, would have been described in a scathing tone by Viktor Korchnoi, as "half moves".

10...♘e7

11 d4

Two points. This is what White's finesse with the bishop was all about: White advances through the middle with maximum effect. In such circumstances the bishop on e6 isn't always well placed – which is why Adhiban was keen to avoid the exchange.

11...exd4

12 cxd4

One point. Keep the pawns together. Nothing for the recapture with the knight.

12...♗b6

13 ♘g3

Three points. The knight arrives on the standard square, covering e4 and looking at f5 and h5. Someone should have copyrighted the ♘b1-d2-f1-g3 manoeuvre.

13 ♗d3 (*one point*) redeploys the bishop to a more dangerous diagonal, but 13...♗g4 keeps White busy by putting pressure on the d4-pawn.

13 d5 (*one point*) isn't the best as after 13...♗d7 White doesn't want to exchange, but 14 ♗d3 c6 challenges successfully; and why open the diagonal for the bishop on b6?

13 e5 (no credit) is worse: 13...dxe5 14 dxe5 ♕xd1 15 ♖xd1 ♘g4 with the initiative.

I showed this position to one of my pupils and he suggested 13 ♕e2 (also no credit). Unfortunately, it's an invitation for Black to put more pressure on the centre with 13...♗g4. Extra lessons for him.

13...d5

In view of White's imposing centre pawns, Black decides to hit back.

14 e5

Adhiban's ever exciting play not only kept spectators enthralled during the World Team Championship, but he also led the Indian team very well, winning individual gold on board one.

Three points. In general, this should be the response to Black's advance. The pawn on e5 creates space for White's pieces on the kingside and pushes away the defending knight from f6.

14 exd5 ♗xd5 gives Black a nice foothold in the centre and the d-pawn is vulnerable. No credit.

14...♘e4

15 ♘xe4

Three points. Removing the imposing knight is the simplest and best continuation.

Having said that, one could also consider 15 ♗d3 (*two points*) 15...♘xg3 16 hxg3. Breaking through on the kingside will be difficult, but pawn to b3 and ♗a3 might be possible at some moment, and I would still prefer to play White.

Here's a direct move: 15 ♘h4 (*two points*). White clears the diagonal for the queen to h5, and the bishop is ready to sacrifice on h6. Black can take the heat out of the position with 15...♘xg3 16 hxg3 ♘f5, but I like White's space and pawn structure.

15...dxe4

16 ♖xe4

One point.

16...c5

It seems we have a precedent. Rodshtein-Dragnev, German Bundesliga 2018, continued with 16...♕d5 17 ♗d3 c5 18 ♗xh6 gxh6 19 ♕d2... with unpredictable consequences, though, in the end, Black predicted them better than White. I suspect Grandelius knew of this game. The machines prefer his move, 16...c5.

17 ♗d3

Five points. Adhiban prefers to reset his pieces rather than hang on to the pawn.

Instead, 17 ♗e3 ♕d5! 18 ♗d3 ♘f5 puts enormous pressure on White's centre. Black will be the first to get his rooks into the middle so has decent compensation for the pawn.

17...♗f5

18 ♖f4

Three points. That wouldn't be my first thought for where the rook belongs. Why are we blocking the bishop on c1?

18 ♖h4 looks like the right move, ready to crash through on h6 – but there is a snag: 18...♘g6! leaves the rook short of squares. White should play 19 ♗xf5 ♘xh4 20 ♘xh4 ♕xh4 and has some compensation for the exchange, but Black's lead in development gives him the better chances.

If White wants a steady move, then 18 ♖e1 (*one point*) keeps everything in order. The position is about equal after 18...cxd4 19 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 20 ♕d3, though White has little chance of a kingside attack.

18...♗xd3

19 ♕xd3

One point.

19...cxd4

20 ♖g4

Three points. It feels right to unmask the bishop on c1 and play the rook to an

attacking square. The rook was merely in transit on f4.

20...♕d7

21 h3

Three points. As well as defending the rook, it's useful to have solved the back-rank problem.

Instead, 21 ♖g3 ♘f5 or 21...♕f5 is OK for Black. The rook is simply on a poor square as it can be attacked by the knight on f5 (in both variations).

21...♕e6

Incidentally, if 21...h5 22 ♖h4 g6 23 g4 gets the attack going. Another bonus of playing the pawn to h3.

22 ♗d2

Three points. Nothing is happening on the kingside (for the time being), so it is high time that White brought up the reserves. This is the most prudent way to develop.

Instead, 22 b3 weakens the c3-square so that after 22...♖fd8 23 ♗a3 ♖ac8 Black has counterplay.

22 ♘xd4 is premature considering that the queen's rook is still stuck in the corner: 22...♗xd4 23 ♖xd4 ♘c6 24 ♖e4 ♖ad8 provides sufficient activity for the pawn.

22...♖ad8

23 ♖e1

Four points. I don't think this was played with any clear purpose; it is just a good square for the rook. It might move up to e4 and then across to the kingside; it might help in capturing the pawn on d4 as the e5-pawn is now doubly protected.

Alternatively, I like the directness of 23 ♘h4 (*two points*), planning to advance the f-pawn. First of all, 23...♕xe5 24 ♗xh6 is winning for White, therefore 23...♔h8 is prudent, and if 24 f4 then Black can choose between 24...g6 and then ...♘f5; or 24...♘d5 and potentially a leap into e3 or c3. All very sharp.

23 a3 or 23 b3 aren't necessary and both slow down White's play (no credit for either).

23...♘f5

24 ♗g5

Seven points. Whack! Black lets his guard down for an instant and is hit with a huge punch. In fact, Black is still able to defend, but the shock of such a move proves to be too much.

24...hxg5

The alternative was to move the rook, 24...♖c8, though Grandelius obviously thought better of allowing in the bishop: 25 ♗f6 g6 26 ♕d2 ♗d8 27 ♖f4, followed by g2-g4 is unpleasant for Black.

25 ♘xg5

One point.

25...♕c8

Black has to hang on to the knight on f5 and 25...♕g6 lands in trouble immediately: 26 ♘e4 ♕e6 27 ♘f6+ ♔h8 28 ♖h4+, for example.

26 ♖f4

Four points. The best move.

At first glance 26 ♘e4 looks right, with the threat of ♘f6+ and ♖h4+, but after 26...g6 Black's king is safe enough.

26 e6 is also a plausible move, but 26...fxe6 27 ♘xe6 ♖de8 pins annoyingly. Even here 28 ♕b3 seems to cause problems, but there is a brilliant counter: 28...a4! 29 ♕xb6 d3 and White can't hold the knight and stop the pawn.

26 ♖h4 is also a mistake: 26...♖de8, with the idea of ...♗d8, saves Black.

26...g6

27 g4

Three points. The only way forward. Instead, 27 e6 fxe6 28 ♘xe6 ♖fe8 still isn't working for White.

27...♘e7

Black cracks. The only possible defence was 27...♘e3. Mind you, Black is in 'only move' territory for many moves after this. There are two possible tries: 28 fxe3 dxe3 29 ♕b3 (threatening f7) 29...♕c7 30 ♖f6, and here 30...♖d1 and 30...♗d4 are both playable and both lead to an even position – I'll leave that to you to explore on your own.

28 e6 is also dangerous when Black has to find 28...♕c6 29 fxe3 dxe3 30 exf7+ ♔h8 31 ♕e4 e2+ 32 ♔g2 ♗e3 33 ♖f6 ♕xf6 34 ♕xe3, and White has compensation, but not enough to gain the advantage.

For the sake of completeness, the alternative retreat 27...♘g7 gets hit by 28 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 29 ♕xg6 ♕c4 30 e6, with a winning attack.

28 ♕g3

Four points. Did Grandelius overlook this simple switch? In fact, 28 ♖f6 (*two points*), with the idea of e5-e6, is also winning.

28...♔g7

29 ♕h4

One point. Yes, it is that easy.

29...♖h8

30 ♖xf7+

One point.

30...♔g8

31 ♖h7 1-0

One point. A comical final move. The rook is trapped and Black gets checkmated after 31...♖xh7+ 32 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 33 ♕f7 mate.

The defence with 27...♘e3 was not easy. I am sure that Grandelius must have seen the move, but found himself unsure of all the consequences, which were mind-boggling. I suspect he was disorientated after missing 24 ♗g5. With Black's queen and knight stationed on the kingside, this hardly looks possible...

Now add up your points:

0-13	Unlucky
14-30	Average Club Player
31-39	Strong Club Player
40-46	FIDE Master
47-53	International Master
54-60	Grandmaster

Ed. – If you have any questions regarding this article, please contact Daniel directly through his website www.danielking.biz.

Opening Trends

There's little change at the top of our chart where the Reti continues to hold sway – and by some margin. The King's Indian and Caro have also been popular of late, but do not lead to such a wide array of position types as the flexible Reti. Even in these theory-laden days, the Reti lends itself to early creativity, as was shown in the very first round of the U.S. Championship.

T.Gareyev-J.Xiong
U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2019
Reti Opening

1 ♘f3 d5 2 c4 d4 3 b4!? ♗g4!?

Trompowsky-like development. 3...f6 is somewhat more common and after 4 ♗b2 e5 5 c5 a5 6 a3 axb4 7 axb4 ♖xa1 8 ♗xa1 ♘c6 (the engine clamours for 8...♕d5 when 9 e3!? ♕a2 10 ♗xd4 exd4 11 exd4 shouldn't give White quite enough for a piece) 9 ♕b3 e4 Black had his ideal centre in Wang-So, Internet (rapid) 2019.

4 ♘e5

White has also developed with 4 ♕b3, after which 4...♗xf3?! 5 ♕xf3 c6 6 g3 e5 7 b5 ♘f6 8 ♗g2 ♗e7 9 d3 felt rather too compliant from Black in Duda-Laznicka, Prague 2019.

4...♗f5 5 e3 ♘f6 6 g4!?

The Blindfold King rarely resists such early aggression, but 6 ♕f3 might have been better.

6...♗e4

6...dxe3! would have exploited the a1-h8 diagonal and after 7 fxe3 ♗e4 8 ♖g1 ♘bd7 White might find himself overextended.

7 f3 ♗g6 8 ♗b2 dxe3 9 dxe3 ♘bd7 10 ♘xg6 hxg6

White has bagged the bishop-pair and should be reasonably happy with how the opening has panned out.

11 ♘c3 e6 12 c5 c6 13 g5 ♘d5?!

13...♘h7! would have been much more combative, with the idea of 14 f4 ♘xg5! 15 fxg5 ♕xg5 16 ♕e2 ♕h4+ 17 ♕f2 ♕xb4 followed by going long.

14 ♘xd5 exd5 15 f4?!

15 h4! and if 15...♕e7 16 ♔f2 was the way to do things, preventing the rook manoeuvre Black makes good use of in the game, while actually leaving the white king the safer of the two.

15...♕e7 16 ♕d2 ♖h4!

Now matters are once again but rather murky, whether White allows 17 0-0-0 a5 or trades rooks as in the game.

17 ♕f2 ♕e4 18 a3 ♕xh1 19 ♕xh4 a5 20 ♕f2?

Gareyev no doubt hoped that the bishop-pair would favour White in the endgame, but unfortunately for him Black has the most relevant pawn break on the board in ...b6. 20 0-0-0!? axb4 21 axb4 ♕e4 22 ♕e1 might appear risky, but after 22...b6 23 ♗d3 ♕e7 24 e4 White has enough play to be OK.

20...axb4 21 axb4 ♖xa1+ 22 ♗xa1 ♕e4 23 ♗c3 b6!

24 ♔d2

White also finds himself in trouble after 24 cxb6 ♕b1+ 25 ♔e2 ♕c2+ 26 ♗d2 ♗xb4 27 ♕e1 ♘xb6.

24...bxc5 25 b5?

Misguided desperation, although even after 25 ♗d3 ♕h1 26 bxc5 ♘xc5 27 ♗c2 Black would have been the clear favourite.

25...cxb5 26 ♗xb5 c4!

The 18-year-old sensation that is Jeffery Xiong takes his chance and finishes in clinical fashion: **27 ♕e2 ♕b1 28 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 29 ♕g4+ ♕f5 30 h3 ♔c6 31 ♔e2 ♔b5 32 ♗d4 ♕xg4+ 33 hxg4 ♔b4 34 e4 dxe4 35 ♔d2 ♗c5 36 ♗xg7 ♔b3 37 f5 e3+ 38 ♔e2 c3 0-1**

The Trends in Chess Openings

The top twenty openings as played by International Masters and Grandmasters in March

1	=	Reti Opening	*192 games*
2	=	King's Indian Defence	*131 games*
3	=	Caro-Kann Defence	*127 games*
4	⇧	Queen's Gambit Declined	*117 games*
5	⇩	1 d4 ♘f6 sidelines	*103 games*
6	⇧	Sicilian, Najdorf var.	*100 games*
7	⇧	Ruy Lopez, Berlin Def.	*92 games*
8	⇩	Nimzo-Indian Defence	*88 games*
9	⇩	Slav Defence	*87 games*
10	⇧	English, 1...c5	*78 games*
11	⇩	Sicilian, 2 ♘f3 d6 sidelines	*77 games*
12	⇧	Catalan Opening	*65 games*
13	⇧	Queen's Indian Defence	*60 games*
14	⇩	1 d4 d5 sidelines	*56 games*
15	⇩	English, 1...♘f6	*55 games*
16	⇩	English, 1...e5	*54 games*
17	⇩	English, 1...e6	*52 games*
18	⇧	Grünfeld Classical var.	*51 games*
19	⇩	Petroff, 3 ♘xe5 var.	*49 games*
20	⇧	French Tarrasch	*46 games*

2,921 games played between 1-31 March where both players were rated over 2400 Elo

Source: TWIC. Compiled by *HIARCS 14.*

In association with *HIARCS Chess Explorer* - hiarcs.com and *The Week in Chess* -- theweekinchess.com

Never Mind the Grandmasters...

Here come the amateurs - by Carl Portman (carl.portman@hotmail.co.uk)

The older I get, the better I used to be. That's what I find myself saying nowadays. I need to face up to reality: I am rubbish at chess in relative terms. My dog seems to understand more than me at times. The other day Darwin actually knocked the board during my analysis of a club game and he moved a rook to the correct square – he really did. It was the best move too. I am calling it the Darwin Defence. I know that Border Collies are meant to be intelligent, but this was ridiculous. He who laughs last and all that – I have my revenge and the crafty canine has only drawn two out of six friendly games against me since that moment, so let's hear it for *Homo Sapiens*.

All chess players have been where I have recently in a mental sense. You are not losing many games, but you aren't winning enough. You burn significant chunks of time for study, but it makes little difference. All too often your opponent has the cheek to play 'the wrong' moves against you, thereby destroying all the intended benefits of your endeavours. Don't even get me going about preparing for the opponent that never turns up or plays on a different board to yours. It is difficult work, this club chess.

However, I think I know what is happening in my games. Often, I reach decent positions which I deem to be slightly better, but they simply will not metamorphose into a win. I simply cannot put the ball into the net after having so much possession, to use a footballing analogy. But why?

Is it really the case that I am so poor at the game, or am I not working hard enough at the board? Maybe I do not possess the correct mindset during the fight and while winning is the aim, at least a draw is not losing, which is very painful to me. I don't believe it is the latter because I really do try to win, but something needs to change.

To illustrate this, I want to share a game I played in March against the ever-affable Julian Summerfield from Solihull Chess Club. He and I were graded about the same – save a few points but I had the white pieces, which has been rare for me this season – and I wanted to make use of them. I had lost a game the night before, albeit to a stronger player, and was bruised and annoyed. I wanted to get back to the board immediately.

How typical though - the opponent I expected was not the same individual who sat at the board. As an aside, my opponent that night would be my teammate for a Solihull match at a later date, so look out for that little story another day.

Carl has discovered that one of his dogs, Darwin, seems to have an aptitude for chess.

C.Portman-J.Summerfield
Banbury A v Solihull B 2019
Dutch Defence

After losing the night before this game I wanted at the very least a draw. I spent some of the afternoon studying our Editor's fine book on the Torre and felt that I would give it a go. There is not so much theory to it in general terms and it can even be a potent weapon as the likes of Mark Hebden have demonstrated. Mind you, I am not Mark Hebden.

1 d4 e6

A clever little move that gives rise for many options. Naturally I wanted to see 1...♘f6 to try and go into the Torre, but both sides can reach openings by transposition.

2 ♘f3 f5!?

I see. It's going to be like that is it?

3 c3

Sheer bloody mindedness on my part. I knew I could play 3 c4, but I decided to stick

with a kind of Torre set-up and see how it went.

3...♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 ♘bd2 b6

I have no idea if this is book, but it surprised me a little.

6 ♗xf6

Why? Because I wanted to play 7 e4.

6...♗xf6 7 e4 fxe4 8 ♘xe4 ♗b7 9 ♗d3 0-0 10 ♕e2

I'd only taken 12 minutes taken to this point. Things look agreeable for White. Black has the bishop-pair, but the dark-squared bishop is not so effective at the moment. Interestingly, after 10 ♕e2 I found 8 games in the database leading to this exact position. However, after 10...a5 that went down to zero. Most people played either 10...♘c6 or 10...♕e7. Amusingly the first time this position arose was in 1915 between Chajes and Michelson in New York, which was won by White.

10...a5!

My opponent had used only four minutes thus far. This looks a bit odd, but to be fair, my engine chose the move also.

11 0-0 ♗a6

A second tempo with the bishop.

12 ♖ad1

Missing 12 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 13 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 14 ♕e4+ ♕f5 15 ♕xa8 ♗xf1 16 ♖xf1 ♘c6 17 ♕b7 ♕f4 when White is clearly better. Curses.

12...♗xd3

A third tempo, but clearly Black thought it worthwhile.

13 ♖xd3

Anyone looking at this position can see that it is White who is a bit better developed and the pieces are targeting the kingside, but the question here is: how to proceed? This is where very strong players quickly form a clear plan, whereas I was thinking about moves. There is a world of difference.

13...♘c6

I need to watch this little rascal. It could go to e7 and then to f4 via g6 or d5.

14 ♘xf6+

My opponent was perplexed afterwards as to why I did this and strong players would sigh at this point. It is true that the knight exerted a certain control in the centre, but I could see no positive way forward. This way I thought I obtained some active play, but we shall see what the engine says when I turn it on...

I turned the beast on and it was actually one of the top three candidates. Not much in it, but it marginally preferred 14 d5, and if 14...exd5 15 ♖xd5 ♘e7 16 ♖dd1.

14...♖xf6!

14...♕xf6 15 ♘e5 ♘xe5 16 dxe5 ♕e7 17 ♖fd1 ♖ad8 is slightly better for White, but there is no gimme here.

15 ♘e5 ♘e7

Played after another good think in the tank.

16 ♕e4

I took time myself here to make this move. The threat is greater than its execution, but it did make Black react and effectively 'waste' a move. I was threatening to take the pawn on d7 with the knight. I looked at other possibilities in 16 ♖h3, 16 f4 and 16 ♘g4, but the engine liked my move too.

16...♖c8 17 ♖h3 ♘g6

After considerable thought. My opponent is making the moves that he has to, not necessarily the ones that he wants to, but he is doing it very well and so avoiding 17...g6?? 18 ♕h4.

18 ♘xg6 ♖xg6 19 f4 ♕e8

My turn for another think. I was really not clear and time was ticking on.

20 f5?!

I knew it. The engine did not like this and it did not figure in any of the top six moves for White. It says the position is roughly equal, while looking at moves like 20 ♖e3. Both sides are running out of pieces to effect any kind of meaningful invasion and checkmate.

20...exf5

The engine now displays its favourite '0.00'.

21 ♕xf5 ♖d8 22 ♖hf3 ♖f6 23 ♕g4 ♖xf3 ½-½

It looked completely drawn to me and there was not a great deal of time left on the clock. I felt a little disappointed really because I thought I had a better position, but at no time did the engine give me a really significant advantage. Whilst I thoroughly enjoyed the game I feel compelled to write a note to self: must do better.

I am sure that we can all relate to this business about being better positionally, but not being able to secure the full point. The question is: what can we do about it? Well, first of all, if I knew the answer to that, I would be doing it. Hard work takes us so far – and one cannot purchase raw talent on eBay no matter how hard one looks.

I might suggest that for me and everyone else in my position it means sticking at it, being totally honest while scrutinising our losses, as well as learning what we can from stronger players and, perhaps if we are able to find funds, securing the services of a chess coach. Chess engines are all well and good for showing us the moves that we could and should have made, but so what? They do not properly explain the game as a strong coach would.

If all else fails for me I can always throw away the books and consult the dog.

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Blundering

Fed up with playing slowly in the opening in a bid to avoid any early blunders, Matthew Lunn took a good look at four strong players blundering

Even the most experienced players are prone to horrendous blunders. We've all been there: the dread realisation that you've miscalculated something, the panic when you miss an obvious retort. These days, I rarely blunder material in the early stages of the game; so fearful am I of this eventuality I fritter my time away, often finding myself in a calamitous ending. I know in my heart it isn't helpful to dwell on the possibility of opening blunders, therefore I have collated four recent examples of strong players making horrific mistakes early doors, in an attempt to exorcise these demons.

J.Martinez Alcantara-
F.Perez Ponsa
Antofagasta 2019
King's Indian Defence

1 c4 g6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♗g7 4 g3 0-0 5 ♗g2 d6 6 0-0 ♗f5

A rare move, but eminently playable.

7 ♘h4 ♗e4 8 ♘f3 ♗f5

I would not dream of putting myself in Black's shoes here. But at this point, facing a GM of a similar rating, he must have thought: "I might be on for a draw here".

9 ♕b3

White decides not to repeat, and his next move threatens to win material. Psychologically, this is very neat.

9...♘c6

Black responds with a novelty, daring White to grab the b7-pawn. 9...♕c8 10 ♘c3 ♘c6 is more common – the text makes sense if you're sure that White can't capture on b7, as ...♕c8 doesn't add much value.

10 ♕xb7 ♘a5??

I can't be sure, but I suspect that Black calculated this far, and either missed White's next or broadly concluded that he must have decent position compensation for the pawn. Instead, 10...♗e4 is an interesting try, seeking a complicated position after 11 ♘bd2 (11 d5 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♘d4 13 ♘d2 ♘d7 looks pleasant for Black) 11...♖b8 12 ♕a6 ♗c2.

11 ♕a6!

And Black's knight has no squares.

11...c5 12 ♗d2 1-0

R.Li-C.Wheeler
Dallas 2018
St. George Defence

1 e4 a6

This is not the only time that Mr. Wheeler has essayed the St. George, so it would be unfair to rationalise the defeat as a folly of experimentation.

2 d4 b5 3 a4 ♗b7 4 ♘d2 b4

Unlike Miles's defeat of Karpov, Black hasn't aimed for an agreeable Sicilian from the get-go, instead reaching an offbeat position from which to outplay his opponent.

5 ♘gf3 e6 6 ♗d3 c5 7 0-0 d6

If you give Black a few moves, then the bulk of a Hedgehog will emerge. White's next move removes that possibility.

8 dxc5 dxc5 9 ♘c4

A fascinating structural change: White loses his big centre, but that c4-knight is gloriously placed.

9...♘f6

Give Black a few more moves and he will consolidate – he has no serious weaknesses.

10 e5 ♘d5

In light of White's next move, Black might have tried 10...♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 ♘d5, although here he doesn't have an obvious plan. For instance, 12 ♗e4 ♘c6 13 c3 ♖a7 (the rook must swing to d7 to prevent ♖d1 simply winning a pawn) 14 ♖d1 ♖d7 15 ♗f4 and Black is practically in zugzwang, the absence of a light-squared bishop making castling a risky endeavour.

11 ♘g5

A wonderful move – at once aggressive and versatile, the knight menaces the kingside whilst threatening to manoeuvre to the inviting d6-square.

11...♘b6??

A sensible positional idea, seeking to swap off a pair of knights to lessen White's attacking potency. Unfortunately, there is a severe tactical drawback.

12 ♘xf7!

Normally this trap is executed with ♗xf7+, and thus it may not have been on Black's radar. Or perhaps he thought that, in a bad position, he might pick up three pieces for a queen, and make things a bit more double-edged.

12...♔xf7 13 ♗g6+ ♔e7

Bringing the game to a swift conclusion. Instead, 13...hxg6 14 ♕xd8 ♘xc4 (14...♘d5 and 15 ♘d6+ is a simple route to victory: 15...♗xd6 16 ♕xh8 ♗xe5 17 ♖e1 and Black's pieces aren't coordinated enough to justify the gulf in material) 15 ♕c7+ not only wins the b7-bishop, but another piece must drop shortly after: 15...♗e7 16 ♕xb7 and the b8-knight must go to save the rook.

14 ♗g5# 1-0

Not all opening blunders are like those that characterised the previous two examples. In the next game, Black reaches a serviceable position, only to be hit by a thunderbolt.

B.Jobava-M.Lopez Martinez
Barcelona 2017
French Defence

1 d4 e6 2 e4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♘ge2 dxe4 5 a3 ♗e7 6 ♘xe4 ♘f6 7 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 8 ♗e3

All looks OK so far. If I were Black I'd be feeling relatively relaxed, perhaps relieved to

have avoided the archetypal Jobava fireworks.

8...b6 9 ♘f4 ♗b7 10 ♕g4

A common square for White's queen in the French, though the placement of Black's bishops makes this an unusual set-up. On the one hand, the g7-pawn is well defended, but the queen cannot be quickly chased away by a black knight.

10...g6 11 ♗b5+

A clever idea, forcing Black to block with his c-pawn.

11...c6

11...♘d7 allows 12 ♘xe6! fxe6 13 ♕xe6+, and Black must give back the piece with 13...♕e7 (13...♗e7 14 0-0 with ♖e1 and ♗g5 to follow is curtains) 14 ♗xd7+, leaving White two pawns to the good.

12 ♗c4 ♕d6 13 0-0-0 ♘d7

Black's position looks comfortable enough – although White benefits from greater flexibility, his pieces are not wonderfully coordinated, and Black should be able to generate activity down the queenside with ...b5 and ...a5.

14 ♘xe6?!

This must have come as a complete shock. It's a wonderful idea, taking advantage of Black's uncastled king, while giving White's bishops and rooks a new lease of life.

14...fxe6 15 ♗f4

Black already has a tough decision.

15...♕e7?

As with our first game, it may be that Black calculated a few moves ahead, but missed a vital detail.

After 15...♕f8 Black has some practical chances, although White's position looks pretty great after 16 ♖he1 0-0-0 17 ♖xe6 as his dark-squared bishop is an absolute monster.

16 ♖he1 0-0-0?

16...♘f8 is forced, but after 17 ♗xe6 h5 18 ♕h3 (18 ♗f7+ ♔xf7 19 ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 20 ♕e2 leaves more room for error) 18...♔d8 19 d5! Black is in real danger of being overrun.

17 ♖xe6 ♕f8

It looks like Black has survived the onslaught, with consolidation now the order of the day. However...

18 ♖xc6+!! 1-0

...wins on the spot. Black resigned here, as 18...♗xc6 19 ♗a6+ ♗b7 20 ♕f3 is mating: 20...♖e8 21 ♕xb7+ ♔d8 22 ♗b5 ♕f7 23 ♗d6, etc.

Of course, whilst piece sacrifices may lead to stunning miniatures, they can also be our downfall.

S.Kuipers-P.Karthikeyan
Hoogeveen 2018
Modern Defence

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♘c3 d6 4 ♗e3 a6 5 ♕d2 ♘d7 6 h4 h6

A standard idea in Modern/Hippopotamus structures, meeting 7 h5 with 7...g5.

7 0-0-0 b5 8 ♔b1 ♗b7 9 f3 ♘b6 10 ♗d3 e6 11 ♘h3

A typical structure has emerged, and both sides should be pretty happy with how their positions are developing.

11...♘f6

An unpleasant square in the short term, but this knight will be well placed on d7, where it can support a ...c5 break.

12 g4 ♘fd7 13 g5

13 h5 g5 14 f4 looks pleasant for White, leading to a better pawn structure. However, after 14...gxf4 15 ♘xf4 c5 White cannot quickly attack f7 and Black is making inroads on the queenside.

13...h5

Personally, I prefer Black's set-up here – the ...c5 break looms over the position, and his queenside attack has fewer uncertainties. As White, I'd be thrilled to get f4 and f5 on the board, but the pin on the e-pawn makes this plan slower than ideal.

14 ♕h2

14 f4 c5 15 dxc5 ♘xc5 16 f5 may work as an exchange sacrifice: 16...gxf5 17 exf5 ♗xh1 18 ♖xh1 and White certainly has compensation. That said, I'm not wholly convinced that he's better after 18...♗xc3 19 ♕xc3 e5, as after 20 ♗xc5 Black is able to play the intermezzo 20...♘a4.

14...c5!

White may have missed that this was possible – ♕h2 should have prevented this pawn break.

15 dxc5

15 ♕xd6 e5! traps the queen, and White can't extricate her without losing material: 16 ♗xb5 cxd4 (not 16...axb5? 17 ♘xb5 and White is close to winning, due to the dual threats of ♘c7+ and dxc5) 17 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 18 ♗xd4 exd4 19 ♘d5 ♗xd5 20 exd5 ♘e5 and White's attack is over.

15...dxc5

Now Black looks clearly better, with his dark-squared bishop menacing the long diagonal, and b- and c-pawns ready to rush down the board. However, Black is behind in development, and White may have a useful tactical resource.

16 ♗xc5!? ♘xc5 17 ♗xb5+

Simultaneously attacking the king and queen, but unfortunately...

17...♘cd7 0-1

....defends both pieces (17...axb5? 18 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19 ♘xb5 would have been enjoyably double-edged), and Black is a piece for two pawns up. White resigned here – crucially his knights have no entry squares, and he cannot therefore maintain his initiative. For instance, 18 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 19 ♕d6 ♘e5 20 ♕b4 ♕e7 and Black's king is perfectly safe. It's difficult not to empathise with White – after all, we've all been there.

Overseas News

AUSTRIA – We were saddened to hear of the death from leukaemia of IM and WGM Eva Moser (xxvi.vii.1982 - xxxi.iii.2019), one of Austria's leading players in recent times. Moser was both a strong player and a journalist, writing for the Austrian chess magazine *Schach-Aktiv*, and also recorded some DVDs for ChessBase. Her best result came at the Gutmann Memorial of 2013 in Augsburg, which she won with 7½/9 for a 2684 performance and GM norm.

AZERBAIJAN – Magnus Carlsen was back to his imperious best at the sixth Gashimov Memorial in Shamkir (31 March - 9 April), crushing the opposition in his final three games to finish on 7/9, some two points ahead of Ding Liren and Sergey Karjakin. We'll have the full story next month.

CZECH REPUBLIC – The Prague International Chess Festival (5-16 March) was modelled on Wijk aan Zee's successful format. Icelandic GM Hannes Stefansson won the Open and so will qualify for next year's Challengers tournament. This year's Challengers was won by David Anton Guijarro with 6/9, finishing half a point ahead of Jan Krejci, with Ju Wenjun a further half-point back in third. As such, the Spanish GM qualifies for the next Masters section, which will no doubt also feature Nikita Vitiugov, the Russian Grandmaster having triumphed in the first Prague Masters with an undefeated 5½/9, scoring important wins against Pentala Harikrishna and the halfway leader, Jan-Krzysztof Duda.

N.Vitiugov-P.Harikrishna
Prague 2019
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♘d6 6 dxe5 ♘xb5 7 a4!?

A tricky sideline against the Berlin.

7...♘bd4 8 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 9 ♕xd4 d5 10 ♕d3 c6 11 a5 ♗e6 12 ♘c3 ♕d7 13 ♘e2

Regrouping the knight towards a better post on d4.

13...♗f5 14 ♕c3 ♗e7?!

After 14...c5 15 ♘g3 ♗e6 16 f4 d4 both sides have mobile majorities and the chances are most likely balanced.

15 ♗h6! d4?

Of course, not 15...gxh6? 16 e6 fxe6 17 ♕xh8+, but 15...♗f8 16 ♗g5 h6 17 ♗h4 c5 18 f4 d4 would have kept White's advantage within bounds.

16 ♘xd4 gxh6 17 e6!

17...♗xe6

17...fxe6 18 ♘xf5 would but be even worse. In any case, White is regaining his piece – and with some interest.

18 ♘xe6 ♖g8 19 ♘f4 ♕f5 20 ♖a4 ♕f6 21 ♕d3 ♖d8 22 ♕xh7 ♖g7 23 ♕e4 ♕xb2 24 ♖e1 ♖d7 25 a6

Finally this little lever is played and triggers the complete collapse of the black position.

25...♖g5 26 h4 ♖b5 27 axb7 ♖bxb7 28 ♕xc6 ♔f8 29 ♕xh6+ ♕g7 30 ♘e6+! 1-0

30...fxe6 31 ♖f4+ ♔g8 (or 31...♗f6 32 ♖xf6+ ♖f7 33 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 34 ♕xe6) 32 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 33 ♖f7 wins the black queen.

GERMANY – We saw last month how Baden-Baden wobbled when the Bundesliga had its big central weekend at the start of March. The final two weekends were back to being held at various clubs around Germany. In the penultimate one (23-24 March), Baden-Baden triumphed on home soil, disposing of both Hamburg and Kiel 6-2, but Solingen continued to match them, overcoming MSA Zugzwang 6-2 and Augsburg 5-3. Solingen had home advantage come the final weekend (6-7 April), but it didn't help them as they went down to Baden-Baden 5-3 in round 14, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Peter Svidler and Richard Rapport all winning, with only Mads Anderson getting on the scoreboard for the hosts.

Baden-Baden certainly weren't weak in that final weekend, fielding Michael Adams no less on bottom board, and they didn't let up come round 15, crushing Düsseldorf 7-1 to win their thirteenth title in 14 years with 24/26. Solingen even slipped to third in the table after losing again, 5½-2½ to Deizisau, being passed for second by Hockenheim for whom David Howell gave a model demonstration of the power of the bishop-pair as he defeated Luke McShane. Baden-Baden's big hitter was Richard Rapport who racked up a huge 10½/13, while Adams chipped in with an also unbeaten 7/9.

KAZAKHSTAN – Unlike their men's team, China dominated the World Women's Team Championship, which also took place in Astana (5-14 March). Winning all 9 of their matches was no mean effort considering they were without not just Hou Yifan, but also Ju Wenjun. Former women's world champion Tan Zhongyi proved a worthy substitute on board one, her 7/9 sufficing for an individual gold medal, while Lei Tingjie racked up a whopping 7/8 on board 3. 20-year-old Aleksandra Goryachkina also impressed, amassing 8/9 on board 4, which helped Russia to the silver medals, ahead of Georgia and Ukraine.

MACEDONIA – There's just no stopping Vladislav Artemiev at the moment. The top

1st Prague Masters - Tuesday 5th - Saturday 16th March 2019, Category 19 (average rating = 2715)

	Player	Country	Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Nikita Vitiugov	RUS	2726	*	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	5½	2794
2	Santosh Gujrathi Vidit	IND	2711	½	*	½	1	½	0	½	1	½	½	5	2758
3	Radoslaw Wojtaszek	POL	2722	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	5	2757
4	Boris Gelfand	ISR	2655	½	0	½	*	½	1	1	½	½	½	5	2765
5	Jan-Krzysztof Duda	POL	2731	0	½	½	½	*	½	0	1	1	1	5	2756
6	Sam Shankland	USA	2731	½	1	½	0	½	*	½	½	½	½	4½	2713
7	Pentala Harikrishna	IND	2730	0	½	½	0	1	½	*	½	½	½	4	2670
8	David Navara	CZE	2739	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	*	½	1	4	2669
9	Richard Rapport	HUN	2738	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	*	1	4	2669
10	Viktor Laznicka	CZE	2670	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	0	*	3	2595

seed was once again most impressive from a technical perspective, racking up '+6' to win the gold medal at the European Individual Championship in Skopje (18-29 March). Nils Grandelius applied a bit of pressure by defeating Benjamin Gledura with the black pieces in the final round to seize the clubhouse lead, but Artemiev held firm against Maxim Rodshtein to prevail on tie-break. Banbury's James Jackson was England's sole representative and began brightly. Indeed, he probably should have defeated Zdenko Kozul in a wild opening round encounter ahead of finishing on '+1' for a gain of 10 rating points.

Leading scores: 1-2 Vladislav Artemiev (RUS), Nils Grandelius (SWE) 8½/11, 3-11 Kacper Piorun (POL), Maxim Rodshtein (ISR), Ferenc Berkes (HUN), David Anton Guijarro (ESP), Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu, Niclas Huschenbeth (both GER), Sergei Movsesian, Eltaj Safarli (both AZE), Grigoriy Oparin (RUS) 8.

V.Artemiev-Z.Hracek
European Individual Championship, Skopje 2019

Artemiev's play may often resemble that of Anatoly Karpov, but like the 12th world champion he can attack too and with verve when the opportunity presents itself, as here.

25 ♖xg7! ♔xg7 26 ♖g3+ ♔h8 27 ♘xd5! ♘xd5 28 ♗h6

Threatening 29 ♗g7+ and 30 ♗f6# and, of course, 28...♖g8 29 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 30 ♕g4+ would lead to the same outcome.

28...♗f6 29 ♕xf6+! 1-0

It's going to be mate down the g-file after all.

THAILAND – Jan Gustafsson won the Bangkok Open for the first time since 2011 after overcoming Deep Sengupta on tie-break, the pair finishing on 7½/9. Nigel Short deployed the Swiss Gambit, shrugging off an early draw and playing some fine attacking chess to join Gustafsson and Vietnamese M Duong The Anh in the lead on 6/7. Unfortunately Short then lost a piece in the run-up to move 40 as he went down to Sengupta in the penultimate round before being held by Chinese IM Lou Yiping.

USA – We saw earlier in this issue that Hikaru Nakamura won the 63rd U.S. Championship in Saint Louis (20-31 March), while Jennifer Yu impressively got the better of Anna Zatonskih in what was a two-horse race until the final round of the 59th U.S. Women's Championship.

The brighest start in the former event was made by 18-year-old Jeffery Xiong, who reached 2½/3 before losing to Ray Robson and fading, possibly as the effects of having earlier in March won the Spring Classic, as we reported on last month, took their toll. Xiong was, however, responsible for knocking defending U.S. Champion Sam Shankland off his stride in the third round.

S.Shankland-J.Xiong
U.S. Championship, St. Louis 2019
Scotch Game

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕f6 5 ♘b3 ♕g6 6 f3 ♘f6 7 ♗f4 ♗b4+ 8 ♔f2!?

Over-the-board inspiration. 8 c3 ♗e7 9 ♕d2 d6 10 c4 had been somewhat more normal in Tagelsir-Saeed, Sharjah 2018.

8...0-0 9 a3?

White needed to go 9 ♗d3 and if 9...♘h5 10 ♗xc7 (10...d6 11 a3 is the difference), if he wanted to justify his ambitious eighth move.

9...♗e7 10 ♗d3 ♘h5!

Already Black has seized a strong initiative.

11 ♗xc7!?

Attempting to complicate. Black's pieces would have been quick to congregate on the kingside after 11 ♗g3 d6 12 ♘c3 ♘e5.

11...d6 12 e5 ♗h4+ 13 ♔f1

13 g3? fails to 13...♗xg3+ 14 hxg3 ♕xg3+, and if 15 ♔e2 ♘f4+ 16 ♔d2 ♘xd3 17 cxd3 ♕xe5 when the white bishop remains trapped and Black is winning.

13...♕h6! 14 exd6

14 ♗xd6 ♖e8 is horrendous too for White, as shown by 15 ♗b5 ♘f4 16 ♕d2 ♗h3! 17 gxh3 ♘xe5 with the deadly threats of 18...♕e6 and 18...♗e1.

14...♖e8

14...♘f4 would have been even stronger, with the idea of 15 ♘c3 ♘xg2! 16 ♔xg2 ♕g5+ 17 ♔f1 ♕e3 18 ♕e2 ♗h3+.

15 ♘c3 ♘e5 16 ♘c5? ♘xf3!

A stunning blow, preparing to drive the white queen off the f-file after 17 ♕xf3? ♖e3 or to mate with 17 gxf3? ♗h3+ 18 ♔g1 ♕e3#.

17 ♘3e4

The best defence, but the knight really needed to come here a move earlier.

17...♗g4?

Too flashy. 17...♘e5 would have preserved all Black's trumps and large advantage, as would have 17...f5.

18 d7!

Much, much stronger than 18 gxf3? ♗h3+ 19 ♔e2 ♘f4+ when White would have been mated.

18...♖e5! 19 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 20 ♕d2 ♕c6

White is the exchange up and his passed pawn a timely asset to deflect the black pieces away from his badly exposed king. Now 21 ♕e3 ♘xd7 22 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 would have left everything up for grabs, as after 23 g3 ♗d8 24 ♘c5 ♗h3+ 25 ♔e1 ♕c6 26 ♗e4 ♕b5, but Shankland was to lose the thread for a third time in the game.

21 h3? ♗xd7 22 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 23 ♕c3 ♕h6 24 g4?

The ever-calm silicon indicates 24 g3 ♗xg3 25 ♗e2 as the only way to survive.

24...f5?

Xiong can't be faulted for bravery, but clearing the e-file with 24...♕f4+ 25 ♔e2 ♘df6 would have led to a mundane win.

25 gxf5 ♖e8

26 ♕c4+?

The final mistake. Unsurprisingly both sides were already running low on time, otherwise Shankland might have found 26 ♖h2, offering some support to his beleaguered king.

26...♔h8 27 ♖g1

27 ♖h2 ♕f4+ 28 ♔g2 ♘e5 should also be decisive.

27...♕e3 28 ♖g2 ♘f4 29 ♖h2 ♘xh3 30 ♔g2 ♘f4+ 31 ♔h1 ♕f3+ 32 ♔g1 ♕g4+ 33 ♔h1 ♕f3+ 34 ♔g1 ♗d8!

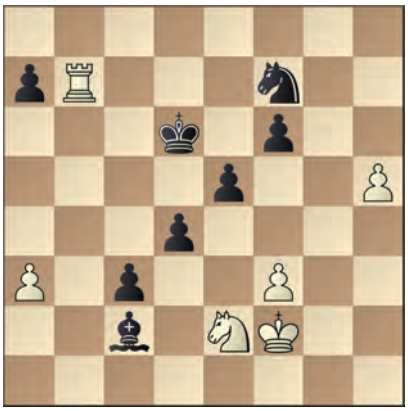
Fine vision. This powerful regrouping is quick to spell the end.

35 ♖f1 ♗b6+ 36 ♘f2 ♕g3+ 37 ♔h1 ♕f3+ 38 ♔g1 ♘h3+ 39 ♖xh3 ♕xh3 40 ♕f4 ♘f6 41 ♗b5 ♖e4 0-1

Another highly entertaining and very principled encounter took place in round 6:

A.Liang-V.Akobian
U.S. Championship, St. Louis 2019
French Winawer

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♘e7 7 ♕g4 cxd4 8 ♗d3 ♕c7 9 ♘e2 dxc3 10 ♕xg7 ♖g8 11 ♕xh7 ♘bc6 12 ♗f4 ♗d7 13 ♗g3 ♘xe5 14 0-0 0-0-0 15 ♕h4 ♘5g6 16 ♗xc7 ♘xh4 17 ♗xd8 ♖xg2+ 18 ♔h1 ♔xd8 19 ♖ab1 e5 20 ♖xb7 ♗c6 21 ♖b8+ ♔c7 22 ♖h8 d4 23 f3 ♘eg6 24 ♗xg6 ♘xg6 25 ♔xg2 ♘xh8 26 h4 f6 27 ♔f2 ♔d6 28 h5 ♗a4 29 ♖g1 ♘f7 30 ♖b1 ♗xc2 31 ♖b7



31...♘h6?

After 31...♘g5 32 ♖xa7 ♘h3+! 33 ♔e1 ♘g1! Black's strong centre would have triumphed.

32 ♖xa7 ♗b3 33 a4 ♗c4 34 a5 c2 35 ♘c1 f5 36 ♖h7?

36 a6! e4 37 ♖a8 e3+ 38 ♔g2 d3 39 ♖d8+ ♔c7 40 a7! was the fearless way to win.

36...♘g8 37 h6 e4?

Now White's rook pawns decide, despite Black managing the impressive achievement of getting three pawns abreast on the seventh rank. Instead, 37...♘f6 38 ♖h8 e4 39 ♖d8+ ♔c5 40 ♖c8+ ♔d5 would most likely have concluded in a repetition.

38 fxe4 fxe4 39 ♖d7+! ♔xd7 40 h7 e3+ 41 ♔f3 e2 42 ♔f2 ♘f6 43 h8♕ ♔e7 44 ♕h4 d3 45 ♕xc4 d2 46 ♕xe2+ ♔f8 47 ♕xd2 ♘e4+ 48 ♔e2 ♘xd2 49 ♔xd2 ♔e7 50 a6 1-0

Jennifer Yu simply kept on winning in St. Louis, overcoming Anna Zatonskih to claim the title with a round to spare. Zatonskih would even slip to third after losing again in the final round.

Two happy 2019 U.S. Chess Champions, 17-year-old Jennifer Yu and 31-year-old Hikaru Nakamura. Both were fully worthy winners, taking risks and grinding too when necessary.

2019 U.S. Women's Championship, Saint Louis, MI, 18th March - 2nd April (Category 2 = average rating 2293 Elo)

	Player	Title	Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Pts	TPR
1	Jennifer Yu	FM	2273	*	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10	2678
2	Tatev Abrahamyan	WGM	2377	½	*	½	½	1	1	1	1	0	1	½	½	7.5	2418
3	Anna Zatonskih	IM	2430	0	½	*	1	½	1	1	1	1	0	1	½	7.5	2413
4	Annie Wang	FM	2304	½	½	0	*	½	½	1	1	½	1	1	½	7	2394
5	Anna Sharevich	WGM	2282	0	0	½	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	0	1	5	2258
6	Irina Krush	GM	2451	0	0	0	½	½	*	½	1	1	0	½	1	5	2243
7	Ashritha Eswaran	WIM	2234	0	0	0	0	½	½	*	1	0	1	1	1	5	2262
8	Carissa Yip	FM	2279	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	*	1	1	1	1	4.5	2229
9	Maggie Feng	FM	2199	0	1	0	½	0	0	1	0	*	1	0	½	4	2199
10	Sabina-Francesca Foisor	WGM	2276	0	0	1	0	½	1	0	0	0	*	1	½	4	2192
11	Akshita Gorti	FM	2272	0	½	0	0	1	½	0	0	1	0	*	1	4	2193
12	Emily Nguyen	WIM	2143	0	½	½	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	*	2.5	2061

Home News

BELFAST – March 23rd saw the Ulster Rapidplay Championships take place in their modern home, the Falls Bowling Club. Teenager Daniil Zelenchuk (Strand) proved too strong, his 6/6 a point and a half more than Danny Roberts (Civil Service) made. The Intermediate, Under-1400 section also saw a 100% score, achieved by Adrian Dornford-Smith, with Ciaran Rowan and young Taufik Kamal (all Strand) back on 4½/6.

BIRMINGHAM – Mark Hebden triumphed in the Birmingham Rapidplay at the Quinborne Community Centre on March 31st.
Open: 1 Mark Hebden (Leicester) 6/7, 2 Lawrence Cooper (Stafford) 5½, 3-6 Tomasz Sygnowski, Henrik Stepanyan (both Sutton Coldfield), Shabir Okhai (Syston), Andrew Brett (Writtle) 4½.
Major: 1 Oleg Cukovs (Poulton-le-Fylde) 5½, 2-4 Shahab Quraishi (West Bromwich), Gheorghe Albu (Braunstone), Dustin Bowcott (Halesowen) 5.
Intermediate: 1 Joe Hirst (Newcastle-under-Lyme) 6½, 2 Gary White (Telford) 6, 3-5 Steve Whatmore (Rugeley), Christopher Evans (Mutual Circle, Birmingham), Tony Shaw (Worcester) 5.
Minor: 1 Don Curry (Halesowen) 6, 2-4 Granville Hill (Latimer), Ansh Agrawal (Harborne), Victor Brown (Walsall Kipping) 5½.

CHESTER – GM Stephen Gordon was held to a draw by both Paul Townsend and John Carleton, but still scooped the £250 first prize as Chester Chess Club celebrated turning 100 with the Chester Centenary Rapidplay on April 7th.
Open: 1 Stephen Gordon (Wood Green) 5/6, 2-4 John Carleton (Chester), Henrik Stepanyan (Sutton Coldfield), Paul Townsend (York) 4½.
Major: 1-2 Philip Zabrocki (Shrewsbury), Michael Connor (Great Lever) 5, 3-4 Robert Clegg (Huddersfield), Tim Jones (Bristol) 4½.
Minor: 1 Robert Owens (Formby) 5½, 2-4 Andrew Hughes (Rhyl), Barry Edgar (Hetton Lyons), Vijay Kakarparthi (Altrincham) 4.

EDINBURGH – Two grandmasters and twos IMs were four of the players who shared first place in the Open at the strong and popular Edinburgh Congress (5-7 April).
Open: 1-6 Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant (Edinburgh West), Danny Gormally (Alnwick), Michael Kopylov (Ukraine), Adam Hunt (Woodbridge), Alan Tate (Wandering Dragons, Edinburgh), Junhao Xian (Glasgow University) 4/5.
Major: 1-2 Joy Durno (Newmachar), Michael Ash (Musselburgh) 4½/5, 3-5 Ewan Taylor, Neil Fleming (both Wandering Dragons, Edinburgh), Martin Robinson (Edinburgh West) 4.
Bishops: 1 Vagif Ramazanov (Bon Accord, Aberdeen) 4½, 2-7 Jamie Hand (Edinburgh University), Louise Adrian (France), David Teague (Harrogate), Steve Gibson (Musselburgh), Andrew Whalley (Edinburgh) , Pranav Arcot (Aberdeen) 4.
Knights: 1 Greig Gordon (Dunfermline) 5, 2 Gary Clarke (Gosforth) 4½, 3-6 Graham Wilson (Corstorphine), David Cubitt (Edinburgh), Iain Hope (Musselburgh), William James (Edinburgh University) 4.

Don't forget that if you're ever in Edinburgh on a Thursday or Sunday afternoon to drop by the Fountain Cafe in the stunning setting of Princes Street Gardens beneath the castle, where from 2-5pm Chess in the Park takes place, often attracting 40 players of all ages.

HULL – It was great to see the 2018 British Chess Championships being shortlisted in the Remarkable Tourism Category at the Remarkable East Yorkshire (REYTA) Awards. Unfortunately that award went to the Humber Street Sesh, although we were pleased to see the Remarkable East Yorkshire Passion Award being presented to Graham Chesters, a strong chessplayer and the chair of Hull's Freedom Festival.

LONDON – What to do when you come up against powerhouse Wood Green in the London League? Battersea Chess Club had a novel solution on April 10th. Rather than field their normal line-up, they allowed 10 England juniors to gain experience against titled opposition. Aditya Verma lost to Luke McShane on top board and Shreyas Royal to Stephen Gordon on board 3, but 11-year-old Luca Buanne drew with Richard Pert and 17-year-old Jacob Watson with John Emms, as Wood Green ran out 9-1 winners.

Latvian FM Dmitrijs Tokranovs triumphed at the latest Golders Green Rapidplay on March 2nd.
Open: 1 Dmitrijs Tokranovs (Latvia) 5½/6, 2 Davit Mirzoyan (King's College) 5, 3 Charles Tippleston (Northampton) 4½.
Major: 1-2 Jonathan Arnott (Sheffield), Neil Davies (Pimlico) 5, 3 Nicholas Mohnblatt (France) 4½.
Minor: 1 Georgi Aleksiev (Bulgaria) 6, 2 Paul Chantrell (Kings Head) 5, 3-4 Matthew Ball (St Albans), Salvatore Pepe (Hendon) 4½.
Amateur: 1 Alexander Funk (Kings Head) 6, 2 Frankie Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill) 4½, 3-6 Allyn Blake (Golders Green), Faye Ainscow (Kings Head), David Dane (Letchworth), Geoffrey Simms (Surbiton) 4.
Improver: 1 Michal Kajda (Newham) 5, 2-3 Aaron Dhillon (Kent), Andrew Jacobs (London) 4½.

We're pleased to report that sales of Roger Noble's (pictured above) lavishly-produced history of chess in Hull, Rank and File, *have raised over £1,200 for Yorkshire Cancer Research. If you'd like to purchase one of the few remaining copies, do please contact roger_noble@hotmail.com. The Hull & District Chess Association would like to thank and acknowledge the funding from Hull Culture and Leisure which made this publication possible.*

Under-80: 1 Vladislav Negura (Bloomberg) 5½, 2 Nick Silver (Middlesex) 5, 3 Oliver Dorn (Hertfordshire) 4½.

Stephen Prior (Grantham) bagged sole first with 4½/5 at the Hampstead Under-2200 Congress (9-10 March), finishing half a point ahead of Aaravamudhan Balaji (Coulsdon), Nicholas Tavoularis (Middlesbrough) and Marcus Osborne (Wimbledon). All of James McDonnell (Streatham), Oliver Finnegan (Loughton), Arnav Srivastava, Steve Pride (both Cambridge), and David Smith (Maidstone) shared first place with 4/5 in the Under-1900 section, while Gert de Block (Cambridge) won the Under-135 with 4½/5, finishing half a point ahead of Michal Kajda (Newham).

NEWBURGH – To celebrate discovering a chessboard and pieces featuring in a 500-year-old inventory of Lindores Abbey, on the edge of the small Fife town, the Lindores Abbey Distillery are putting on a very special chess event over the weekend of May 25th and 26th. None other than the world champion, Magnus Carlsen, will be taking part in a unique tournament, with Vishy Anand and Ding Liren two of the other three players confirmed. To celebrate the occasion the distillery are creating a special edition of their Aqua Vitae spirit. For further information, do see lindoresabbeydistillery.com.

NOTTINGHAM – The Nottingham Congress (23-24 March) featured an incremental time control and computerised pairings, with IM Alan Merry holding off two GMs to pocket the £1,000 first prize.

Open: 1 Alan Merry (Bury St Edmunds) 4½/5, 2-4 Mark Hebden (Leicester), Oleg Korneev (Spain), Jonah Willow (West Nottingham) 4.

Major: 1 Stefan Walentowicz (West Bridgford) 4½, 2-3 Jim Davis (Sheffield), John Cawston (Selby) 4.

Intermediate: 1-4 Neal Fisher (Peterborough), Alan Ruffle (Swadlincote), Andrew Allen (Worksop), Bill Egan (Scunthorpe) 4.

Minor: 1 Leonard Barham (Peterborough) 4½, 2-4 Ben Larkin (Stratford-upon-Avon), Lijith Job, Douglas Bramley (both Spondon) 4.

One of Alan Merry's victims was Aditya Munshi, but the Nottingham High School pupil bounced back with a fine queen sacrifice en route to finishing on 3/5.

Notes by Aditya Munshi

A.Munshi-J.Garnett
Nottingham 2019
Scandinavian Defence

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♘f6 3 d4 ♗g4 4 ♗b5+ ♘bd7 5 ♗e2

5 f3 is the main move, but sharper.

5...♗xe2 6 ♕xe2 ♘xd5 7 c4 ♘5b6 8 ♘f3 g6 9 ♘c3 ♗g7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗f4 e6 12 a4

Provoking Black's next to make ♕b5 more powerful.

12...a5 13 c5 ♘d5 14 ♘xd5 exd5 15 ♕b5 b6 16 cxb6 ♘xb6 17 ♖ac1 ♘c4

18 b3! ♖b8 19 bxc4!

Also the engine's top suggestion after some thought.

19...♖xb5 20 cxb5

Black is hopelessly uncoordinated.

20...♕e7 21 ♗xc7 ♕b4 22 b6 ♗xd4 23 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 24 b7 ♕xa4 25 ♖b1!

The most precise. White is now winning.

25...♔g7 26 ♗d6 ♖d8 27 b8♕ ♖xb8 28 ♖xb8 ♕e4 29 ♗f8+ ♔f6 30 ♖b6+ ♔f5 31 ♗g7 a4 32 ♖f6+ ♔g5 33 ♖f3

Threatening ♗f6+ and intending to meet 33...h5 with 34 h4+! ♔xh4 35 ♗f6+ ♔g4 36 ♖d1.

33...f5 34 ♖g3+ ♔h5 35 ♖h3+ ♔g5 36 f4+ ♔g4 37 ♗f6 g5 38 ♗xg5 ♕d4+ 39 ♔h1 1-0

Nottingham teenager Aditya Munshi was in action in the Reykjavik Open as we went to press. In his home congress he crushed the Scandinavian with the aid of a fine queen sacrifice.

PENCOED – Tom Brown (Cardiff) triumphed with 5½/6 in the Welsh Rapidplay

Championship on March 23rd. Grzegorz Toczek (Cardiff) and Ian Jones (Swansea) shared second on 4½, while in the subsequent Welsh Blitz Championship, Alex Bullen (Cardiff) finished first with 9/11, half a point ahead of Toczek, with Brown and Robert Taylor (Malpas) a further half point back.

SOLIHULL – Paul Littlewood and Kevin Bowmer became the English Over-50 and Over-65 Champions respectively at the English Seniors Championships (4-7 April). We'll have the best of the chess and a full report next time.

ST ALBANS – Thanks to a final round victory over IM Richard Bates, John Merriman triumphed ahead of plenty of titled opposition at the St Albans Congress (6-7 April).
Open: 1 John Merriman (Petts Wood) 4½, 2-3 Richard Pert (Billericay), Chris Ward (Beckenham) 4.
Challengers: 1 Joshua Pink (Stockport) 4½, 2 Brendan Ruane (Hastings) 4, 3-6 Victor Jamroz (Petts Wood), Ernest Karumazondo (Watford), Robert Collopy (St Albans), Mark Whitehead (Rochdale) 3½.
Major: 1 Andrew Brocklehurst (Civil Service) 4½ 2-5 Alan Prince (Edinburgh), Gavin Hughes (Brentwood), Stephen Mitchell (Slough), Vladimir Bovtramovics (Woking) 4.

Recently retired former world champion, Vladimir Kramnik, paid a friendly visit to the Chess & Bridge shop in Baker Street. He ended up buying some books and magazines (strong players do still read chess books!), and even had the time to analyse with Malcolm a recent Carlsen game.

Intermediate: 1 Dave Turner (Bourne End) 4½, 2-5 Simon Moth (Loughton), Dennis Wright (Barnet), Francois Swiegers (Stevenage), Simon Morris (Hertford) 4.
Minor: 1 Anthony Dunford (Exeter) 5, 2 Steven Ashworth (Ely) 4½, 3-8 Gul Kapur (Enfield), Tim Cutter (Guildford), Joan Gardner (Buckinghamshire), Patrick Sartain (Harrow), Tomy Joseph (Watford), William Stock (Hastings) 4.

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Solutions

to Find the Winning Moves (pages 36-38)

1) Mcleod-Leon Cazares
1...♕xf1+! 2 ♔xf1 ♖c1# 0-1

2) Maghsoodloo-Kulaots
1...♖a3+! 0-1 It's mate next move on a1 or b1.

3) Rogers-Isaakidis
1 ♗xf6+! (much more clinical than the mundane 1 ♗d2) **1...gxf6 2 ♕xf6+ ♔d7 3 ♕g7+ 1-0** 3...♔c8 4 ♘xd6+ ♔d8 5 ♕xh8+ ♔c7 6 ♕c8+ will quickly lead to mate.

4) Mitra-Chan
Black went too many pawns ahead: **1...♖xe3+! 2 ♔xe3 ♗xd4+ 0-1**

5) Hymer-Carpenter
White's queen proved a mere bystander: **1...♕xf1+! 2 ♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 3 ♔xf1 dxc2 0-1**

6) Edwards-Taylor
Black missed **1...♘e2+!** (1...♕xb6? 2 ♗xb6 ♘e2+ fails to 3 ♔f1 ♘g3+ 4 ♔f2) **2 ♖xe2 ♕xb6 3 ♗xb6 ♖xe2**, which would have won the exchange.

7) Zatonskih-Sebag
1 ♘b5! cxb5 (of course 1...♕e7 fails to 2 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 3 ♗xg7) **2 ♕xb5+ ♔f8 3 ♕xh5** bagged a pawn while continuing White's powerful initiative.

8) Fodor-Longson
1 ♖c7! 1-0 A decisive overloading. Black either collapses on f7 or via 1...♘xc7 2 ♕f6+.

9) Horton-Bond
White has a few variants on the same theme, but the most brutal finish would have been **1 ♖1e6! ♔h7** (or 1...f6 2 ♕c2, which is a deadly retreat) **2 ♖xg6! ♔xg6 3 ♗e4+ f5 4 ♕g7+ ♔h5 5 ♗f3#**

10) Van der Wiel-Warmerdam
1...♘xe4! 2 ♗xd8? (2 ♕h5 g5 is only an extra pawn for Black) **2...♗xf2+ 3 ♔e2 ♗g4+ 4 ♔d3 ♘e5+! 5 ♔xe4 f5+ 6 ♔f4 ♘g6# 0-1**

11) Handley-Cherupalli
1 ♗xh7+! ♔h8 (1...♔xh7 2 ♘g5+ is an easy win if the king retreats or with 2...♔g6 3 ♕e4+ f5 4 exf6+ ♔xf6 5 ♕xe6#) **2 ♗c2** (2 ♘g5 is even stronger, and if 2...g6 3 ♗xg6! fxg6 4 h5) **2...♘xc3 3 ♕d3 ♘e4 4 ♘g5** left White with a very strong initiative.

12) Attree-Britnell
1 ♕xc4! would have been a neat way to win a piece, in view of 1...♕xa7 2 ♕xc8+ and 1...♖xc4 2 ♖xb7 ♖xc3 3 ♗e4.

13) Timmins-Handley
1 ♘xh5! gxh5 (the attack is too strong in any case as shown by 1...♗xa3 2 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 3 gxf6) **2 ♕e2 ♗xa3 3 ♗h7+! 1-0** It's mate in two.

14) McNally-Donnelly
1...♔h7! 2 f7 (2 ♖g7+ would hope for 2...♔h8 3 ♖c7 ♖xf6+ 4 ♔e3 when Black will struggle to win with his king cut off, but 2...♔h6! 3 ♖f7 ♔g6 4 ♖c7 ♔xf6 is an easy win, as pointed out by Mike Donnelly) **2...♔xg6 0-1** 3 f8♕ fails to 3...♖f6+ 4 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 with a trivial win.

15) Gelfand-Harikrishna
1 ♘xb5! 1-0 1...axb5 2 ♖xc5 will soon win further material, as shown by 2...♘xc5 3 ♖xd8 ♖exd8 4 ♕xc5, 2...♖c7 3 ♘a6 and 2...♖e7 3 ♗xb5! ♖xc5 4 ♕xc5 ♘xc5? 5 ♖xd8+. White can also win material with 1 ♘ca2!.

16) Cullum-Mason
Black unfortunately missed the lovely **1...♘f5!** (of course, 1...♕f4+ 2 ♔h1 ♕f1+ 3 ♔h2 ♘f5! would transpose, whereas 2...♘f1 3 ♕f3 would keep the game going) **2 gxf5** (2 ♗f2 ♗xf2 3 ♖xf2 ♕xf2 4 gxf5 ♕f4+ 5 ♔g1 ♖c8 is totally hopeless too) **2...♗g1+ 3 ♔h1 ♗f2+ 4 ♔h2 ♕g1#**

17) Sreeves-Adair
At the end of a long and dramatic game Black was shouldered out in instructive fashion: 1...♔g3? 2 ♔e3 ♔g2 3 ♖g8+ ♔f1 4 ♖h8 ♔g2 5 ♔e2 h2 6 ♖g8+ ♔h3 7 ♔f2 h1♘+ 8 ♔f3 ♔h2 9 ♖g2+ ♔h3 10 ♖g7 ♔h2 11 ♖xa7 ♔g1 12 ♖a2 1-0. However, **1...h2!** would have drawn, and if 2 ♖g8+ ♔h3 or 2 ♖h8 ♔g3 3 ♔e3 ♔g2 4 ♖g8+ ♔f1 and White is unable to win.

18) Guichard-Howell
1...♖xf2+! 2 ♔xf2 ♗xc5+ 3 ♔f3 (3 ♔f1 ♗xb4 4 ♗xb4 ♕b7 would be quite hopeless for White) **3...♗xb4 4 ♕xb4 ♖a4 5 ♕e7** and now 5...♕a8! would have won, whereas the game's **5...♖xe4?** could have allowed White to save herself with 6 ♖d1! when Black has nothing better than 6...♖f4+ 7 ♔e2 ♖e4+ 8 ♔f3 ♖f4+.

19) Kobo-Mikhalevski
1 ♘g6+! ♕xg6 (1...♔h7? 2 ♘xf8+ ♖xf8 3 ♕xc4 ♕xd2 4 f6+ ♔h8 5 ♕xc5 is even worse for Black) **2 ♕xd8! ♕g3** (White's extra material would count after 2...♕f7 3 e6 ♕e7 4 ♕xe7 ♗xe7 5 ♗e4) **3 ♕c7 ♕xf3** and now the simplest win, as pointed out by Victor Mikhalevski, who went on to even turn the game round in the time scramble, was **4 ♖xh6+! gxh6 5 f6**.

20) Herega-Bajec
1 ♗xg7+! ♔xg7 2 ♖g3+ ♔h8 (2...♔xh6 3 ♕g4 ♗g5 4 ♘f3! also wins, and if 4...♖g8 5 ♕h3+ ♔g7 6 ♘xg5 ♔f8 7 ♕h6+ ♔e7 8 ♘xe6!) **3 ♕g4 ♗f6?** (now it's mate, but Black would have been killed down the h-file after 3...♗g5 4 fxg5) **4 ♕g8+! 1-0**

21) Michalik-Stocek
1 ♖xf3! ♖e2+ (1...♖xh4+ 2 gxh4 ♗xf3 3 ♖xf3 ♕xf3 4 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 5 ♕xc4 is also a draw of course) **2 ♔h3!** (the star move; White will be saved by a stalemate trick) **2...♗xf3 3 ♖xf3! ♕xf3 4 ♕h8+ ♔g6 5 ♕h7+! ♔f6 6 ♕f7+ ♔xf7 ½-½**

22) Stewart-Wadsworth
1 ♔h2! (essential; White presumably thought that stalemate tricks would save him after 1 ♗d7 g3 2 ♗c6+ ♔f2 3 ♗g2, but the f-pawn proved decisive and Black won: 3...♗a7 4 ♗f3 ♗b8 5 ♗d5 f5 6 ♗c6 f4 7 a7 ♗xa7 8 ♗f3 ♗b8 9 ♗g2 f3 10 ♗xf3 ♔xf3 11 ♔g1 ♗a7+ 0-1) **1...g3+** (it's unclear how else to make progress with White's bishop so well placed and 1...♔f4 2 ♗e6 f5 3 ♗d7 ♔e5 4 ♔g3 not really leading anywhere, with 4...♔f6 5 ♔g2 ♔g5 6 ♗c6 an important defensive construction, and if 6...f4 7 ♗d5 ♔f5 8 ♗c6 ♔e5 9 ♗d7) **2 ♔h3 ♔f2 3 ♗b7 f5 4 ♗c6 f4 5 ♔g4** is the key idea, leaving Black unable to win in view of **5...g2 6 ♗xg2 ♔xg2 7 a7 ♗xa7 8 ♔xf4**.

23) Hunt-Povah
Black was able to defend in the game after 1 ♗xd5 ♖a7 2 ♕a4 ♘d6, but **1 ♕xd5! ♖a7** (or 1...♘c7? 2 ♕d7 ♖a7 3 ♖e7) **2 ♕b3!** would have been a deadly backwards move, and if 2...♕d8 3 ♕e3 or 2...♕xb3 3 ♖xe8+ ♔h7 4 ♖xh8+ ♔xh8 5 axb3.

24) Kardashevskiy-Divya
1...♔f7! (1...♘c2? was preferred in the game, but after 2 ♔g6! a1♕ 3 ♗xa1 ♘xa1 4 ♔g7 ♔e6 5 ♔g6 ♔e7 6 ♔g7 ♔e6 Black was unable to win, the game ending in stalemate after 7 ♔g6 ♘b3 8 f5+ ♔e5 9 f6 ♘d4 10 f7 ♘e6 11 ♔xh6 ♔f6 12 f8♕+! ♘xf8 ½-½) **2 ♔e5** (2 ♔e4 ♔e6! 3 f5+ ♔e7 is also winning: for example, 4 ♔e5 ♘c2 5 ♔d5 a1♕ 6 ♗xa1 ♘xa1 7 ♔xc5 ♘c2 8 ♔b6 ♔f6 9 c5 ♔xf5 10 c6 ♘b4 11 c7 ♘d5+ 12 ♔b7 ♘xc7 13 ♔xc7 ♔g5) **2...♘d3+! 3 ♔d6** (if 3 ♔f5 ♘c1 4 ♔e4 ♔e6 5 f5+ ♔d6 6 ♗e5+ ♔e7 7 ♔d5 ♘b3 and Black will again be able to safely queen, or 3 ♔e4 ♘c1 4 ♔d5 ♘e2 5 ♗a1 ♘g3 6 ♔xc5 ♘xh5 when White is unable to deal with both rook pawns) **3...♘xf4 4 ♔xc5 ♘xh5 5 ♔b4** (the king can also go the other way, but 5 ♔d4 ♘g3 6 ♔e3 h5 7 ♔f3 h4 8 ♔g4 ♘f5! is a key and decisive device) **5...♘f4 6 ♔b3 ♘e2 7 ♗b2 h5** (7...♘c1+ 8 ♔c2 h5 also works) **8 ♔xa2 ♔e6** is winning for Black. White has to ditch the c-pawn to bring his bishop over, but **9 c5 h4 10 c6 ♔d6 11 c7 ♔xc7 12 ♗e5+ ♔c6 13 ♔b3 ♔d5** is a fairly easy win for Black thanks to his superior king: for example, **14 ♗h2 ♔e4 15 ♔c2 ♔f3 16 ♔d2 h3 17 ♔e1 ♘g3** and wins.

This Month's New Releases

Play the Alekhine Defence
Alexei Kornev, 288 pages
Chess Stars
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

Chess Stars are not as prolific as some chess publishers and their range, focussing on opening manuals, could be said to be bordering on the unambitious. However, I always find their output to be well thought out and offering genuine instruction.

Alekhine's Defence lacks a devoted superstar to elevate it from "occasional weapon" to "no.1 defence to 1 e4". Fischer tried his best – and famously used the defence successfully in his 1972 title match with Spassky – but we never got to see how he would have developed the theory further than in the relatively small amount of games in which he utilised 1...♘f6.

Nevertheless, Fischer's name is a curious omission from the introduction, when it name-checks other famous players who liked to play the opening – including, somewhat obscurely, Smyslov. It is also pushing it to claim "It was to the efforts of Alexander Alekhine, who contributed greatly to the development of the main lines of this opening, that it was named after him and was universally acknowledged." History aside, I found the actual chess content to be more inspiring.

Anyone looking to take up Alekhine's Defence has three main issues to ponder and they all receive sound coverage in this volume. The Four Pawns Attack and other provocations will be welcomed by the second player, who is looking for a wild battle. Frankly, anyone going into a game without having carefully studied the sharpest lines is not going to have a much fun in this opening.

However, white players often don't pick up the gauntlet. Indeed, there are lots of club players who prefer 2 ♘c3, hoping to keep the game quiet, or at last away from any deeply prepared lines. These are the sort of players who simply refuse to enter into any complications and after 2...d5 they even like to play 3 exd5, when it is not at all easy to play for a win with Black. 3...♘xd5 4 ♗c4 is a common choice and the recommendation here is for Black to station the knights on b6 and c6, and the bishops on e7 and f5. Black must try to create an imbalance to counter White's recalcitrance on the matter and one way to do so is to try and seize the bishop-pair with a timely ...♘a5. There are some sharp tries with Black eschewing castling kingside and playing ...g5 instead.

The Voronezh System presented 1...♘f6 aficionados with significant problems a decade or so ago. This offshoot from the Exchange Variation (5...cxd6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♗e3 ♗g7 8 ♕d2 0-0 9 ♖c1) sees White striding into a space advantage, but it doesn't leave any legs trailing. Finally, the classical approach by White with 1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 remains a real test of Black's resources. The recommendation here is 4...g6. "This move was in the shadow of some other systems for long years, but it gradually became more and more popular." The formerly-popular 4...♗g4 is dismissed as it "Has failed to withstand the test of time and presently there are just a few players who might be willing to defend Black's position."

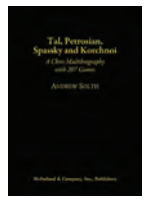
Black's biggest problem after 4 ♘f3 is the spectre of passivity. Think of being on the wrong end of a 1970-style Karpov squeeze, which is exactly the fate awaiting Black if the second player tries to ascend the slippery slope.

Careful steps are required from the very start. After **1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 g6 5 ♗c4 ♘b6 6 ♗b3 ♗g7 7 ♘g5** Black already has to be very careful and play **7...e6!**. "This is the only way for Black to fight not only for equality, but also for creating active counterplay." Fast-forward a few moves and we can see what the author has in mind for this system.

"Black's plan is quite simple. He exerts pressure against the enemy pawn on d4 and wishes to provoke the move ♘f3, after which White will have no attacking chances whatsoever." This is what happens after **13 ♘f3** (if 13 ♗e3 ♘d5!) **13...f6** when Black has made good progress. If such a position appeals to the reader then the Alekhine Defence is worth considering.

Alekhine's Defence is definitely a perfectly valid option as an occasional or surprise weapon, but it cannot be played without a good grasp of the theory. This book offers solid coverage of everything players with the black pieces need to know to get themselves up and running with 1 e4 ♘f6.

Sean Marsh



Tal, Petrosian, Spassky and Korchnoi
Andrew Soltis, 388 pages
McFarland
RRP £54.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £49.45**

Some may say the chess giants of the title are almost too mainstream for a McFarland hardback, which are normally massive tomes on lesser-known players. Others may say each of the four giants deserve a full volume all to themselves. The justification of utilising a relatively low page count on the careers of three world champions and a twice-runner-up for the title is the way in which Soltis tries to weave together the respective strands of their lives, both on and off the chessboard.

Subtitled 'A Chess Multibiography with 206 Games', the book has 15 chapters taking the story from 'Four Boys' through to 'Countdown to Calamity'. As Soltis explains in his introduction, "Everyone who takes chess seriously knows the games of Mikhail Tal, Boris Spassky, Tigran Petrosian and Viktor Korchnoi. But they know very little about their private lives." He goes on to add, "This is remarkable because their life stories are much more dramatic, heart-rending, even terrifying than those of today's elite players."

The early days make grim reading. Wartime woes, parental deaths and extremely poor family backgrounds; in short, character building of the toughest kind. Chess was the most convenient escape and the terrible backgrounds of the players proved to be one of the main inspirations for them to move through the ranks.

The four giants were always rivals and sometimes friends. Their respective rivalries led to many bitter encounters and jealousy. Soltis points out that Spassky and Korchnoi battled against each for an incredible 61

years, making Karpov and Kasparov's 34 years appear paltry. It really is an incredibly long time and the fact is the games still meant a lot to the players, right to the end. I remember talking to Korchnoi towards the end of the 2009 London Chess Classic as he was just about to go to the airport to head off to play the rapidplay match in Elista and how motivated he was to produce a good result (it ended 4-4).

For a long time the West would have had the impression that the Soviet chess machine was well-oiled and highly efficient, but under the surface there were many tensions. These were in evidence during the famous USSR versus Rest of the World match of 1970, with "Angry disagreements among the players and with the *vlasti*, the Soviet authorities, over who should be on the top boards." Spassky confirmed: "The atmosphere was terrible."

As the players develop and the titles come and go, certain characteristics crystalise in their respective personalities. Korchnoi, in particular, had a grim determination to push himself to the maximum – a quality that never left him. Soltis uses this as a touchstone for comparison with the other three players. "He [Korchnoi] sought the maximum score in a tournament even when he was assured of first prize. In contrast, Spassky would be content with clinching first place. Petrosian would be satisfied with one of the top prizes. And Tal would be happy if he won some nice games."

Along the way, we encounter significant appearances from other chess giants, such as Botvinnik, Stein, Bronstein and Geller. I was not aware that Geller had fallen out with Petrosian and the reasons remain vague, although jealousy cannot be ruled out. Nuances of character are accentuated too. For example, it is interesting to observe that Petrosian, despite being known as 'Iron Tigran', actually suffered from nerves in key encounters, which is why he was content to 'just' take a main prize rather than take a few risks to aim for the top place in a tournament. Compare this ethos with the example in the following game.

J.Diez del Corral-V.Korchnoi
Palma de Mallorca 1968

"Korchnoi's ability to gauge his own acceptable risk and beat draw-minded players was impressive."

21...♗d8 looks reasonable for Korchnoi, but he set up a typically poisonous counterattack with **21...♗c5! 22 ♕xf6 cxb3 23 axb3 ♖e7!** when the introduction of the queen's rook via f8 proved decisive (0-1, 29).

There are some interesting photographs in the book that I don't recall seeing before, including a great one of Geller, Petrosian, Zaitsev and Averbakh exploring midtown Manhattan during the 1954 USSR versus US match.

The story effectively ends in 1972, with Spassky's calamitous loss of the title to Fischer. A three-page epilogue rounds off the stories of the four players and this is the weakness of the book. The rivalries of the four players still raged for some time after 1972, both on the board and behind the scenes. Korchnoi went on to play three more highly dramatic Candidates' matches with Petrosian and one against Spassky. Meanwhile, Tal joined Karpov's team to plot against Korchnoi when the Soviets were desperate to stop the latter – a hated, outspoken dissident – from taking the title. There would have been enough post-1972 material to double the page-count, especially as the Korchnoi-Petrosian matches have never received the attention they deserve.

Nevertheless, what we have is excellent material, despite leaving the story curiously unfinished. This will be essential reading for anyone interested in learning more about four of the most legendary of all players.

Sean Marsh

A Complete Guide to Flank Openings
Neil McDonald, 400 pages, paperback
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

Club players looking to take up 1 ♘f3 or 1 c4 for the first time could still do far worse than start with Everyman's old *Starting Out* series. That's where their latest compendium work comes from, packaging together two works by the Kent Grandmaster, *Starting Out: The English* and *Starting Out: The Reti*.

Anti-London System
Yannick Pelletier, PC-DVD;
running time: 4 hours, 50 minutes
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

The popularity of the London System continues to permeate through the chess world. French-speaking readers may be interested to know that ChessBase have also released of late Christian Bauer's *Le Système de Londres avec 2.Ff4*, but Pelletier's brief is to present methods by which Black should tackle the pesky London. The Swiss Grandmaster does this in English – and well. Of course, everyone likes to meet 1 d4 in different ways, so by no means all of this DVD will be of use to most viewers, but almost everyone will find something of interest. Pelletier looks at 2...g6 lines, 1 d4 d5 types of London and Queen's Indian set-ups for Black, while even taking a quick look at how Dutch and 2...c5 players should react if faced with the London.

Chess Informant 139
Chess Informant, 352 pages, paperback
RRP £32.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.69**

As ever, the most recent Informator covers the latest novelties, leading games, amazing combinations and instructive endgames, all annotated in trademark languageless fashion. There is also coverage of Wijk and Gibraltar, as well as theoretical surveys from Ferenc Berkes, who looks at new trends in the Symmetrical English, and Aleksander Delchev, who presents a repertoire for White against the Scandinavian.

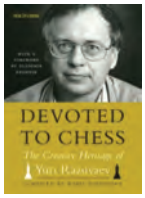
Please note that if you'd also like a CD of *Chess Informant 139* that is available for a combined price of £42.99 (Subscribers – £38.69) or if you only want the CD, Chess & Bridge can supply that too for just £9.99 or only £8.99 for Subscribers.

Coach Yourself
Neil McDonald, 304 pages, paperback
RRP £18.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.09**

What to do when you find yourself stuck at the same chess level for a while and without access to a good coach? Step forward Neil McDonald, one of the best chess writers out there, who makes a welcome return for Everyman Chess. He believes that the answer often lies in knowing how to make the best use of the time you set aside for chess study. McDonald shows how to really analyse your games to identify then cut out certain types of mistakes, while also presenting plenty of instructive material to help improve the reader's calculational ability, as well as their understanding of the middlegame and the endgame.

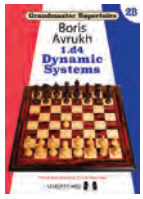
Coaching the Chess Stars
Vladimir Tukmakov, 352 pages, paperback
RRP £28.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.05**

Thinkers Publishing continue to attract some big name authors, Tukmakov being, of course, a famous Ukrainian Grandmaster and chess trainer. The list of players he has worked with is certainly impressive: Geller, Karpov, Eljanov, Giri and So. He has also led Ukraine twice to the gold medals in the Olympiad and has won the European Club Cup as a captain. Now Tukmakov reveals just how he identified what was holding back each of his pupils and how he went about improving their game.



Devoted to Chess:
The Creative Heritage of Yuri Razuvaev
Boris Postovsky, 365 pages, paperback
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

Yuri Razuvaev (1945-2012) is a name likely known to readers for being a strong grandmaster and a noted theoretician, but he is actually best known in the former Soviet Union for being a top-class trainer. Gelfand, Karpov and Salov were but three leading players who worked with Razuvaev, while more recently both the young Carlsen and Caruana travelled to learn from him. With a foreword from Vladimir Kramnik, Postovsky's work presents Razuvaev's best games, as well as his finest articles and thoughts. It's an inspiring read, Razuvaev coming across as witty and accessible, as well as highly intelligent and with a great feel for the game to which he really did devote his whole life.



Grandmaster Repertoire 1.d4:
Dynamic Systems
Boris Avrukh, 592 pages, paperback
RRP £23.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £21.59**

Also known as 'Volume 2B', Boris Avrukh completes the latest version of his 1 d4 repertoire for White by examining the likes of the Dutch, Czech Benoni and the Benko. The most notable changes to Avrukh's earlier repertoire are that 4 ♗f4 is now the line of choice against the Budapest and that 1 d4 d6 is no longer met by 2 ♘f3, but rather 2 c4.

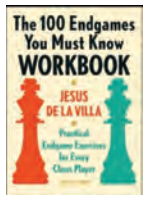
If you'd prefer to receive your latest Avrukh theoretical tome in hardback format, that is available too for £27.99 or £25.19 for Subscribers.

New in Chess Yearbook 130
Peter Boel, René Olthof, Jan Timman (eds.),
256 pages, paperback
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

The latest Yearbook features the world champion on the cover with the headline 'Carlsen rules in obscure Sicilians'. Fans of theory will enjoy the many letters in the Forum, as well as Erwin L'Ami on 'Incredibly Demanding Lines', not to mention the meat of the product, the 26 theoretical surveys themselves. These ranging from razor-sharp Sicilian theory to René Olthof's discussion of Mike Basman's g-pawn opening preferences to Luke McShane's coverage of 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 d4 exd4.

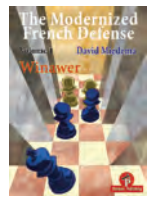
Openings: Semi-Open Games
Jerzy Konikowski & Uwe Bekemann,
236 pages, paperback
RRP £19.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.95**

Konikowski and Bekemann continue their series for Joachim Beyer Verlag by explaining the basics behind the Caro, French, Alekhine and Scandinavian. Their aim is to help even the most inexperienced player pick up the initial moves of each opening and especially understand the ideas behind them. Almost every move receives plenty of explanation, as do the various pawn structures and key plans.



The 100 Endgames You
Must Know Workbook
Jesus De la Villa, 288 pages, paperback
RRP £20.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £18.69**

That modern classic *100 Endgames You Must Know* showed that endgame books can sell, and well. Quite possibly only *Game Changer* has sold better for New in Chess, who must have been delighted to receive new material from De la Villa. The result of the Spanish Grandmaster's labours is a wealth of material which will serve to reinforce the lessons presented in his seminal work. If you wanted more material to help master the technique of, say, rook and pawn against rook, it can be found here, in abundance and amongst some hundreds of exercises for the reader to solve.



The Modernized French Defense
Volume 1: Winawer
David Miedema, 272 pages, paperback
RRP £27.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £25.15**

David Miedema, a Dutch IM, is certainly an enthusiastic advocate of the French Defence, not least his favourite Winawer variation. The good news for many French exponents is that Miedema doesn't disappoint, the backbone of his repertoire for Black being the highly complex 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♘e7 7 ♕g4 ♕c7, dangling the g- and h-pawns before White. Coverage is extremely up to date, as well as complete and features plenty of unplayed improvements for Black.

The Science of Strategy
Alexander Kotov, 240 pages, paperback
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

Alexander Kotov is best known for *Think Like a Grandmaster*, but he was also a very strong player who liked to instruct his readers and pupils. Kudos to Quality Chess for introducing the English-speaking world to this translation of a Soviet classic. Unsurprisingly Kotov's coverage is pretty scientific, but structured thought is no bad thing when it comes to planning and assessing various types of pawn structure. Flank play, counter-attacking and manoeuvring are some other topics covered in slightly old-fashioned, but also clear and instructive fashion by Kotov.

Once again from Quality Chess, it's also possible to enjoy *The Science of Strategy* in hardback format, available from Chess & Bridge for £23.99 or £21.59 for Subscribers.

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Something old, something new... Readers may recall my February 2019 issue in which I recounted how, as a relief from watching the draw-bound deadlock of the London clash between Carlsen and Caruana, I took solace in the vastly more entertaining games to be found in Alan McGowan's splendid book on Kurt Richter. Looking back, it was probably tempting fate to hold a world championship chess match in Britain in the current climate. As the rest of the world is now only too painfully aware, nothing decisive ever seems to happen here, even when someone tries to force the issue by holding a referendum.

Compare and contrast the past week or two, with Magnus Carlsen playing chess like his all-time hero – himself, three or four years ago. Once again I've been splitting my chess entertainment between the here and now, watching the Shamkir tournament by day, and studying old classics by night. My chosen favourite read currently are the two volumes of Alekhine's *Best Games*, with his own annotations, published by Bell many years ago.

What has struck me rereading them is how similar Carlsen, in his current rampant form, is to Alekhine when he was about the same age (or a smidgen older). Carlsen usually gets compared to Capablanca or Karpov, but when he's hot, he's not unlike the third world champion in terms of his burning ambition, practical play and readiness to indulge in chessboard complexity.

How to explain Carlsen's recent resurgence? I've no doubt Malcolm will be addressing this in his editorial, but there's no harm in me having my say too. Psychology must play a huge part. 2019 represents a sort of 'gap year' for the title-holder as regards the world championship, so he can afford to relax a bit and play with a freer approach. On the other hand, one imagines Magnus would have been dissatisfied with his general showing at classical chess last year and would be keen to reassert himself as *numero uno*. So, plenty of positive motivation, but not too much pressure.

Another important factor is Magnus's 'goody bag' of opening preparation left over from the London match. Opening theory has not always been one of the champ's strong suits compared to his well-booked-up rivals, but with a fresh arsenal of weapons which hasn't yet reached its use-by date at his disposal, he becomes all the more formidable. At least, we can say that with hindsight, after his overwhelming success in Azerbaijan, but from the point of view of other elite players it might have looked different as the tournament began.

One can hardly blame Magnus's rivals for wanting to have a go at his black repertoire, in particular his none too convincing plan against the Nd5 Sveshnikov Sicilian. This is a common syndrome after world championship matches: one recalls the advent of the 'Berlin Wall' in 2000, with the newly-crowned champion Kramnik having to fend off those grandmasters who thought they could do better than Kasparov. In the end, as I recall (possibly inaccurately), it was Kasparov himself who was first to breach the metaphorical masonry of the aforementioned structure, although this didn't entirely refute it or make it unfashionable.

In a roundabout way, Carlsen's triumph at Shamkir represents a measure of success for non-participant Fabiano Caruana as well as the man himself. Several of Carlsen's opponents tried to improve on Caruana's play in London and, with the exception of Ding Liren, did significantly worse than the American.

That corroborates the impression that, despite the lack of decisive games at last year's world championship, the two players contesting the title were the worthiest to be doing so. This is also reflected in the new world order at the top of the rating list: after a period in which we seemed to be moving towards a 'first among equals' situation which we old-timers remember from the Petrosian era, once again the Norwegian has gone into turbo-drive and moved well ahead of the pack, with Caruana and Ding Liren at a respectful distance and the rest quite a long way adrift. As things stand, the last two names must be joint favourites to challenge Carlsen in 2020, but these are still early days.

I wonder whether another factor might have helped raise Carlsen's game a notch. Has he been studying *AlphaZero*? Well, that's probably a daft question: how could someone of his standing *not* have taken an interest in the AI-generated cyber-monster. Maybe he takes the Sadler/Regan *Game Changer* book to bed with him for light reading. I couldn't help noticing those three final games in Shamkir, in each of which he played a positional pawn sacrifice at some point to secure the initiative. All very *AlphaZero*, with its aggressive Alekhine/Kasparov style approach to chess.

Are we witnessing the advent of AlphaMagnus? Is the champion gradually morphing from being a 'grinder' to a 'thumper'? In times gone by, the world champion's style of play has often set the fashion for the times, but with silicon now incontrovertibly setting the standard, it shouldn't be surprising if the world's top players, including the champion himself, should take their lead from the best chessplaying entity available.

Incidentally, this trend towards the more proactive, aggressive chess shown by *AlphaZero* was part of my own motivation in dusting off my Alekhine books. Decades have passed since I first read them and I can no longer remember my early impressions of his play, but rereading them I was struck by the freshness and modernity of his approach to the game. Some of the opening play of his era might be adjudged naive or tame by modern standards, but in every other respect the method and quality of his play seems akin to that of the pragmatic 21st century super-GM. I only wish I'd got them down from the shelf sooner.

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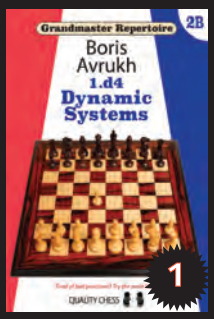

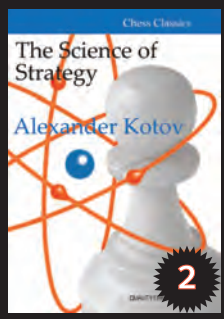

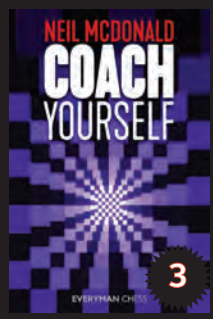

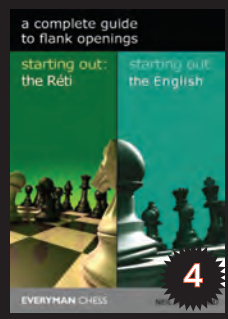

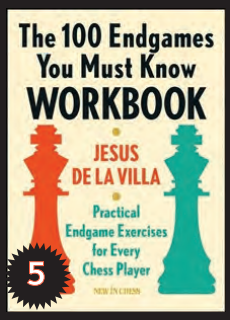

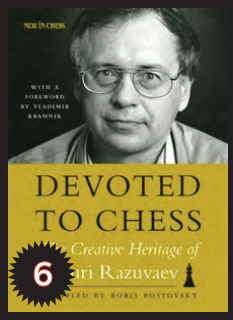

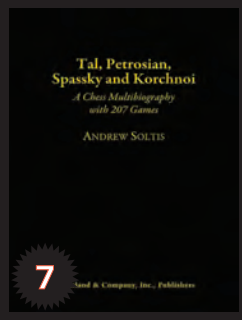

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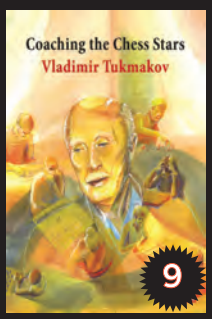

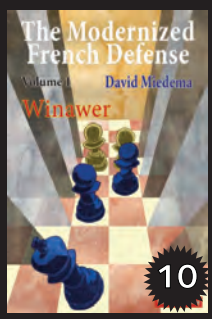

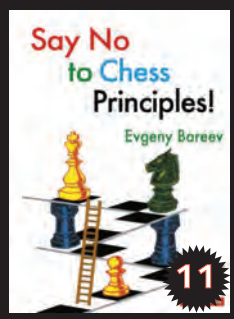

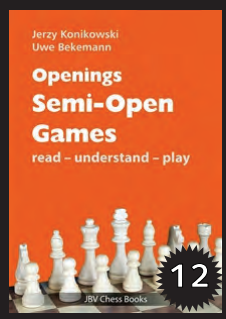

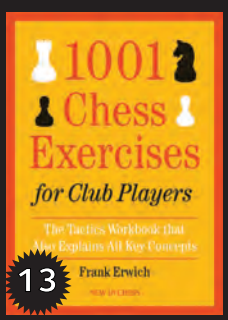

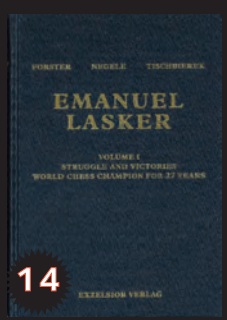

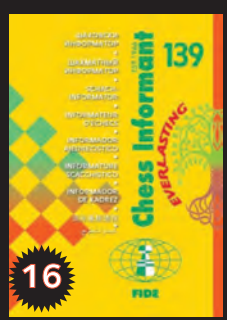

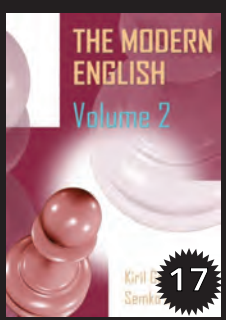

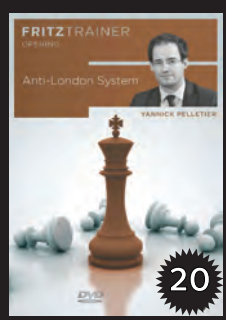

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